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An examination of academic decision-making during two university mergers

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A Dissertation

entitled

An Examination of Academic Decision-Making During Two University Mergers

by

Brian Weinblatt

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Higher Education

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August 2012

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An Abstract of
An Examination of Academic Decision-Making During Two University Mergers

by

Brian Weinblatt

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Higher Education Administration

The University of Toledo
August 2012

This study examined decision-making processes during two university mergers, instances of major organizational change. Processes were evaluated in the context of traditional and modern academic decision-making models. A qualitative method of inquiry, designed as a multiple instrumental case study, entailed interviews with 6 participants at a pilot site, followed by 37 interviews and document analysis at two case study sites. Interview transcripts and documents were coded and analyzed, yielding a thematic evaluation.

Four major themes were found pertaining to the two mergers: *avoidance of conflict, need for validation, momentum, and disconnect among views*. The study found that more traditional models of decision-making were employed at one institution, while more modern models were used at the other. Both institutions exhibited administrative leadership utilizing tools to exert influence to effect the mergers. Conclusions included a highlight on American higher education institutions in transition from traditional to more modern approaches of decision-making, described as a “grey zone” between the models. Implications of the study included the necessity for modern higher education

administrators to maintain a delicate balance between traditional and evolving modern approaches of higher education decision-making.

For my parents, Fran and Chuck Weinblatt, who always supported me in doing anything I set my mind to, and blessed me with unconditional love.

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Chapter One

Introduction

America's colleges and universities are in a state of flux. Pressures of change bear down from many sides, including reduced state support, rising costs of doing business, calls for greater accountability and transparency, and competition between institutions. Business as usual will be difficult, at best. These pressures rest squarely on the shoulders of the leaders of the institutions, campus CEOs, and trustees.

Higher education executives face many challenges in a dynamic educational and political climate. Many seasoned leaders of colleges and universities find themselves forced to make difficult decisions they may have never envisioned facing earlier in their careers. In navigating this period of change, the astute higher education administrator must give due diligence to his or her constituents. Calls for change within higher education come from a diverse population—politicians, faculty, staff, students, parents, taxpayers, alumni, and more. To maintain critical support from these constituents, higher education executives must make decisions to satisfy as many groups as possible.

The shifting landscape in American higher education brings administrative decision-making to the fore. Eckel and Kezar (2006) suggested that a change has occurred in academic decision-making from decisions predominantly made within academic units to a more centralized approach. The reasons for the shift range from reduced funding and the push for accountability to globalization and expansion of auxiliary initiatives. Herein, a conflict develops—that of faculties accustomed to shared governance versus a reduction in the faculty role amidst more administrative control.

Managing complex situations is a skill that the astute college or university administrator always needed to succeed in changing educational climates. While an aptitude for keen decision-making has been vital in campus leadership roles for generations, leaders today must also be especially politically savvy and able to inspire faith and confidence among constituents.

Present Economic Climate

Higher education in America was changing dramatically before the economic downturn that began in late 2007 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008), but these financial constraints have exacerbated problems within many colleges and universities forcing institutions to adapt rapidly. The world is transitioning into a knowledge-based economy. More college-educated citizens than ever before are needed to make this economy thrive, and politicians and higher education leaders are feeling the pressure to make college and university educations more accessible.

A national study by the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University showed that, for the first time in 5 years, state aid for higher education grew more slowly in 2008-2009 than the prior year. Across the United States, appropriations for higher education grew less than 1% in 2008-2009 after annual increases of 3.8%, 6%, 7.1%, and 7.5%. Declines in tax dollars for higher education were reported in 14 states, with the largest cut of 17.7% in South Carolina (Kelderman, 2009).

Another study conducted in December 2008 by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and Moody's Investors Service highlighted actions that colleges and universities were taking as a result of budgetary problems. Employee layoffs had taken place at 1 out of 10 institutions in the study, with an additional 26% considering layoffs.

Hiring freezes were in effect at a rate of 40% for faculty positions and 60% for non-faculty jobs. As for mid-year budget cuts, 60% of the public institutions surveyed indicated they had mid-year cuts, with 43% of the private institutions reflecting the same. Private donations have been shown to be on the decline, with nearly 60% of study participants showing a decline in annual giving totals to date (Blumenstyk, 2009).

Institutions of higher education are being forced to do more with less. While state subsidy for higher education slips or increases marginally in many states, institutions are asked to hold the line on tuition in order to improve access for students. A 2006 report by the Ohio Board of Regents showed that a college degree in Ohio cost 45% more than the national average (Provance, 2008). While operating expenses rise, institutions are asked to look to collaborate more and look for enhanced efficiencies.

Recent Higher Education Climate in Ohio

An example of a statewide response to pressures on higher education can be found in Ohio. The University System of Ohio was formalized under Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and Chancellor Eric Fingerhut in 2007. It was formed as a coordinating body to oversee the public higher education institutions in the state. Part of a 10-year state plan for the University System of Ohio included ending competition between schools by having each maintain specific, yet-to-be-identified missions as part of regional “centers of excellence” (Provance, 2008). This attempt to define centers of excellence involved reducing the duplication of programs among institutions, as well as encouraging collaboration. Ohio Board of Regents’ Chancellor Eric Fingerhut hailed the 2006 merger of the University of Toledo (UT) and Medical University of Ohio (MUO) as an example of this type of collaboration.

While no other institutions in Ohio have recently seen collaboration on the scale of the UT-MUO merger, higher education administrators and politicians continue to explore other opportunities. The Northeast Ohio Universities Collaboration and Innovation Study Commission issued a report in late 2007 outlining opportunities for institutions in that part of the state. Institutions participating in the study included Cleveland State University, Kent State University, the University of Akron, Youngstown State University, and the Northeast Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy. Recommendations in the report included (a) Akron building on its research foundation; (b) Cleveland State developing a regional department for computer science majors; (c) fine and performing arts productions traveling from one school to another; and (d) a joint program for students to earn a bachelor's and medical degree in as little as 6 years, working with Cleveland-area physicians. Other recommendations in the report suggested administrative efficiencies such as centralizing printing services and having a uniform medical coverage for employees among the institutions (Starzyk, 2008).

Recent Higher Education Climate in Colorado

One of the challenges of higher education in Colorado is what is known as the Colorado Paradox. "This refers to the way in which Colorado's high per capita income level and educational attainment rates are fueled by its ability to attract highly educated individuals from other states rather than by its ability to effectively educate its own residents" (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2009, p. 2). While considering this situation during the early part of this century, and anticipating growth patterns of students with low educational attainment rates, Colorado policymakers

attempted to devise new models to increase participation and success rates in college, particularly in underrepresented groups.

In 1992, Colorado voters approved an amendment to the Colorado Constitution limiting tax revenue for all levels of government. The Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, restricted state and local governments from raising tax rates without voter approval and limited governments from spending revenues collected under existing tax rates if revenues grew faster than the rate of inflation and population growth. During the initial years of TABOR, funding for K-12 education deteriorated. As a result, Colorado voters approved Amendment 23, which guaranteed minimum levels of funding for education. Amendment 23 specified that per-pupil funding be required to keep pace with the rate of inflation (Colorado Department of the Treasury, 2010).

As a result of TABOR and Amendment 23, public institutions of higher education in Colorado were left with a series of budget cuts. In 2004, University of Colorado President Elizabeth Hoffman warned that, by the end of the decade, public higher education would simply run out of money (Temple & Carroll, 2004). At the same time, serious concerns abounded in Colorado related to the participation of Coloradans in higher education. Colorado ranked 45th in the country in getting its poorest students into college and 30th at getting any students to college (Curtin, 2004).

Later in 2004, the Colorado legislature gave all the state's institutions of higher learning "enterprise" status. That excused them from the limits of TABOR, leaving colleges and universities free to raise tuition faster than TABOR had allowed, pending final approvals on tuition rates by the legislature (Frank, 2005). The enterprise status was achieved through a new policy whereby Colorado financed higher education through

vouchers rather than direct appropriations to institutions. As a result, the College Opportunity Fund (COF) was created to give a stipend for all lawfully present Colorado residents to use to offset their in-state tuition costs at the public (and eligible private) higher education institution of their choice (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2009).

While the main impetus for introducing the voucher system with the COF was to provide a work-around for restrictions set by TABOR, other reasons were outlined by proponents during the approval process. Some believed that the enhanced market forces provided by the legislation would compel colleges and universities to become more efficient and conscious of the need to recruit state students. Additionally, it was thought that the stipend would promote access to higher education for underrepresented populations including the poor, minorities, and males (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2009).

Aside from providing a funding solution around TABOR, a 2009 report by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) found that the COF has not achieved its desired results. Analysis of data showed that the stipend's inception in the 2005-2006 academic year coincided with declines in the number of targeted populations enrolling in higher education, despite increases nationally. Additionally, students from underrepresented racial/ethnic and low-income backgrounds were less likely to be enrolled under the COF than previously (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2009).

National Trends and Directions

Several significant reports in recent years outline the calls for change in higher education. Spurred by constituencies including students, parents, and politicians, these reports outline the concerns that the American public hold for colleges and universities.

An annual report entitled *Squeeze Play* was produced by Public Agenda, a national public research organization. In the 2010 report, many people had serious concerns about the cost to attend college. Loans were of concern as well. To this end, more and more people feared the opportunity to attend college was diminishing. Despite these concerns, a majority of respondents felt it was likely that their children would attend college and that loan and scholarship funds were available to assist with the cost of tuition. There was increasing concern from parents that colleges and universities were acting more like businesses and taking care of themselves, rather than focusing on the success of the student. Nearly half of those surveyed believed their state's public college and university system needed to be fundamentally overhauled.

In September 2006, the United States Department of Education released *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*, a report of the commission appointed by then-Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The new commission, also known as the Spellings Commission, was charged with developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The commission was formed partly due to the ever-increasing calls for accountability within higher education from politicians, students, and parents. These calls suggested people simply wanted better and more information readily available about colleges and universities to make sound judgments about institution choice. People believed that, if

they invest a significant amount of money in a degree, they should feel comfortable from the beginning in making their college choice.

A major revamping of higher education may be imminent. In its final report, the Spellings Commission called for an overhaul of higher education, emphasizing the need to make colleges and universities more innovative, more accountable to the public, and more affordable (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Innovation was one of the main tenets of the Spellings Commission report and decisions to innovate were explored in this dissertation. Innovation in this context involves higher education institutions transforming into entrepreneurial and responsive organizations that are more agile than today and adapt to the shifting needs of their constituencies. Innovation can occur in relatively modest ways, such as the decision to implement a new customer service model for students, with the intent to improve retention. Decisions to innovate can also lead to more significant events, such as a new research and development arm or collaboration with another institution, up through and including the level of a merger.

Recent results from an unpublished international study described by Schmidt (2009) detailed perceptions of faculty members at 4-year colleges. In the United States, these faculty members see their colleges' administrations as autocratic with decision-making a top-down process. The report also noted that faculty members felt that they had less power within their institutions than they did in the early 1990s. As a result, the study suggested faculty members were maintaining job satisfaction by "withdrawing from involvement in their institutions' governance and instead focusing on their own academic pursuits" (Schmidt, 2009, para. 4). These modern approaches entail a shifting of the

traditional balance of shared governance. While there may be a broad change, Eckel (2000) explored shared governance in institutional hard decisions—those involving program elimination. Through his four-site study, Eckel found that, while central administrators initiated and led all of the processes, the deliberations and analysis were shared with the faculty. Eckel (2000) suggested that the study findings do not support views of rethinking “outdated models” of governance structures and processes, and that it “refutes the belief that more authority for administrators will lead to better institutional decision-making” (p. 33).

Decision-making overall is undergoing a comprehensive shift in American higher education today. One of the most transformative decisions involving a higher education institution is to merge with another academic institution. While a merger is collaboration to the highest degree, politicians are looking for other means of cooperation, such as less duplication of programs and services to improve efficiencies.

Background and History of Mergers Examined

This study explored issues related to decision-making in higher education through the context of a merger setting. Examined were contrasts between traditional academic decision-making and more modern academic decision-making. Historically, merger has been a business function. As merger becomes more prevalent in higher education, it is explored to better understand the evolution of decision-making in this arena. To implement a change such as a merger is perhaps the most significant management exercise undertaken by a college or university.

Examined in this study were two institutions that have recently undergone a merger, with a third institution as a pilot site for the questions: the University of Colorado

at Denver and the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (consolidated in 2004), the University of Toledo and the Medical University of Ohio at Toledo (merged in 2006), and Nova University and the Southeastern University of the Health Sciences (merged in 1994).

Nova Southeastern University

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) was the pilot site for this study. Nova Southeastern University was formed as a combination of Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences in 1994. The merger added a health science component to Nova, with its beginnings as a graduate institution in the physical and social sciences. Today, NSU is the largest private, not-for-profit higher education institution in the southeast, and the sixth-largest nationally. An early leader in distance and online education, NSU over the years significantly expanded academic offerings to include programs in law, education, business, psychology, computer science, oceanography, social and systemic studies, and hospitality (NSU, 2008).

University of Colorado Denver

The University of Colorado Denver (UCD) was formed with the 2004 consolidation of the University of Colorado at Denver and the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. The main campus is in downtown Denver, and the Health Sciences campus relocated to the Fitzsimmons Campus in Aurora. The \$1.2 billion annual operation services approximately 29,000 students and 500,000 patients annually. Academic centers include schools in architecture and planning, arts and media, business, education and human development, engineering and applied science, liberal arts and

sciences, public affairs, dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and public health (UC Denver, 2008).

The University of Toledo

The University of Toledo (UT) was formed as a result of a 2006 merger between an institution of the same name and the Medical University of Ohio (MUO), formerly the Medical College of Ohio (MCO). The merger significantly expanded UT's health science offerings, adding colleges of medicine, nursing, and allied health to existing Main Campus programs in pharmacy and health and human services. Additional colleges at UT include arts and sciences, business administration, education, engineering and law (McGinnis, McMillen, & Gold, 2007). Post-merger, with a combined budget for 2007-2008 of \$730 million, UT became the third-largest public higher education institution in Ohio (McBain, 2009; The University of Toledo, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The various pressures on colleges and universities today force them to adapt quickly and emphatically. Shifting models of academic decision-making may cause friction in institutions as shared governance erodes within modern approaches utilizing less faculty and staff participation. From daily deliberations to once-in-a-lifetime transformational decisions, higher education executives find themselves dealing with complex issues in new and different ways.

The higher education decision-making process as examined here involved the circumstances of a major organizational change. Merger is an extensive administrative exercise in an academic institution. Within this type of major institutional change, far

outside the realm of day-to-day operations of an institution, a variety of decision-making processes may be used.

This study examined decision-making during two academic mergers, events entailing major organizational change. Through the course of research conducted here, decision-making exhibited through the early stages of the mergers were examined.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to learn specific, detailed knowledge of the decision-making processes used during the preliminary stages of two recent mergers.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the methods of decision-making employed prior to the point when the merger was legislatively approved and by whom?
2. Do the methods utilized fall within or outside the framework of traditional academic decision-making?
3. What aspects of these methods align with the modern model of academic decision-making as described in the literature?

Definitions

Several words and phrases are common to the academic decision-making and college and university merger literature. Those with unique contexts to this study are defined here:

Garbage can. Refers to Cohen, March, and Olsen's (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice. Also references the metaphorical receptacle in which participants in colleges and universities "dump" problems and solutions.

Merger/consolidation. These words are used synonymously to describe the action of one or more institutions permanently combining (Martin & Samels, 1994).

Shared governance. The notion of shared authority in the academy, highlighted by faculty and staff participation in institutional decision-making processes (Millett, 1968).

Significance of the Problem

This research is significant to the higher education community on multiple fronts. Eckel and Kezar (2006) suggested that higher education decision-making was going through an overhaul. These changes were due to factors previously discussed including shifting market resources and funding, accountability and transparency as well as globalization, a changing workforce, and expansion of auxiliary initiatives. While traditional academic decisions predominantly took place within academic units, Eckel and Kezar posited that more decisions now occur centrally. It is reasonable to comprehend why a fundamental decision such as a university merger must take place at the institutional level. Other major decisions, such as the revamping of the undergraduate curriculum, also may need to be made at the institutional level, not in the respective colleges and schools. Major decisions can be deliberated at length or tabled in various committees, with representatives from one academic unit arriving at vastly different conclusions than another academic group. This extended process does not facilitate the new era of agility and responsiveness demanded by today's pressures on higher education. Understanding the current direction of higher education governance and administration is critical to the success of any college or university administrator. Examination of the decision-making processes in the early onset of these mergers may

reveal a new approach to higher education management. This study contributed new information to the field, exploring emerging decision-making approaches necessary to be successful in today's colleges and universities.

Additionally, the knowledge revealed about executive decision-making during the early stages of the mergers may aid administrators in their understanding of how to deal with a multitude of situations but particularly within complex organizational change. Variations of complex change in higher education may include events such as the addition or subtraction of an academic unit, major revision of the core curriculum, massive budget contraction, deployment of transformational technology, or a variety of other significant issues. A merger may be the most substantial possible change that an institution can undergo. Examining decision-making in a merger setting provides a unique and insightful view into the management directions of higher education leaders today.

Finally, mergers in higher education may become more common in the future, and if so, leaders with such expertise will be desirable to institutions undergoing similar changes. This type of experience would prove valuable not only in a future merger setting but for a variety of higher education climates and circumstances.

Conceptual Framework

A growing body of literature is devoted to higher education mergers. While much of the research has taken place internationally, particularly in Australia and Europe, some literature is specific to mergers in the United States. However, much of what is written are case studies that include concise histories and examinations of overall processes of a

merger. Less common are studies that delve into specific aspects of the mergers utilizing a cross-institutional approach.

Additionally, a solid base of literature existed regarding decision-making in higher education, which historically focuses on shared governance and “traditional” forms of higher education decision-making. Of note is Cohen and March’s (1986) seminal book, *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President*, which posited that the president has limited control; that colleges and universities are “organized anarchies,” full of ambiguity (unknown goals); and that institutions utilize “garbage can” decision-making due to the wide variety of constituents, agendas, and viewpoints.

Eckel and Kezar (2006) portrayed a new model for higher education decision-making, one that was more reflective of for-profit enterprises and the marketplace. They explored a variety of factors reshaping decision-making in higher education, including shifting demands on faculty, growth of administrative layers within the academy, and development of additional ancillary functions. Technology was also a major influence that reshaped the world daily. Eckel and Kezar argued that higher education cannot resist these shifting tides if it is to remain competitive.

The garbage can model of organizational choice originated by Cohen et al. (1972) served as the conceptual framework for this study. This model demonstrated how traditional academic decision-making occurs through the many complex layers and participants in colleges and universities. This model also served to examine modern academic decision-making, as Cohen and March (1986) suggested that campus leaders can exert control with careful manipulation of the various streams in the garbage can setting. An alternative to rational choice theories, Cohen et al. outlined these independent

streams as problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. Rather than rational approaches of decision-making that follow a methodical step-by-step approach, Cohen et al. suggested that decisions arise in a much more ambiguous manner in the garbage can setting. Through examination in this study, it may be found that site institutions were functioning more or less with the garbage can model as Cohen et al. suggested, potentially in a traditional manner or potentially in a modern approach with leaders exercising control of the streams as Cohen and March (1986) later suggested. While functioning in the garbage can setting, Cohen and March (1986) suggested a series of 8 basic rules or guidelines that administrators can employ to make a difference in key organizational decisions and exert influence. This study allowed for examination utilizing these rules, to see if, when, and how these processes actually took place.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to two mergers at public universities in the 2000s. A pilot examination of the interview questions was conducted at a private university with a merger in the 1990s. Participants were limited to those who were involved in the early-onset period of merger negotiations.

Limitations

The preeminent modern text on higher education mergers is *Merging Colleges for Mutual Growth* by Martin and Samels (1994). At the center of this text was a concept that the authors outline as merging for the right reasons—for mutual growth. This entailed two institutions coming together not to bail out one or the other institution financially but to grow two strong, independent institutions into one larger, more robust organization. Strategies observed in this dissertation may only be applicable in similar

mutual growth mergers such as the combinations explored in this study. Other mergers that are employed to “bail out” one or more institutions in financial disarray may have a different set of issues and strategies for executives to engage.

Assumptions

Based upon the literature (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Millett, 1976), it was assumed that the early merger discussions took place exclusively at the highest level of university governance (presidents, trustees, legislators, etc.) and behind closed doors. It was assumed that the climate of the garbage can model as described by Cohen et al. (1972) was in effect to some degree at the institutions at the time of the merger. Participants were to be honest in their responses and recall past events accurately. Additionally, interview participants understood questions as they were posed and responded directly and openly, if possible. If participants were not comfortable responding to a question, it was assumed that they indicated as such and did not respond. Finally, it was assumed that all requested documents were received in their original, unaltered form.

Summary

The mergers examined here provided an excellent opportunity to study higher education leadership and decision-making by executives dealing with a major organizational change. Not only did these individuals have the tremendous task of merging two complex institutions, some were forced to do so within a volatile economic and political environment. Leaders of other institutions would benefit greatly from understanding some of the methods and skills utilized by the leaders of these institutions.

Chapter Two of this study includes a review of the literature, including sections on academic decision-making, college and university mergers, and the conceptual

framework. Chapter Three follows with the research methodology that was used to conduct the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

A review of relevant literature for this dissertation centered around three main topics: academic decision-making, higher education mergers, and the theoretical framework—Cohen et al.'s (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice. While a significant body of literature existed on the topics of mergers and decision-making in the business field, much less of this information was found concerning the academic arena. A small but growing corpus of literature existed concerning mergers in higher education.

This chapter begins with an examination of academic decision-making, contrasting established, traditional models with evolving, modern approaches. A discussion of higher education mergers follows, with detailed examination into several important facets of mergers. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework, examining the garbage can model.

Academic Decision-Making

Decision-making customs and traditions are deeply rooted in the rich history of the world's higher education institutions. Dating back to the world's earliest colleges and universities, faculty shared administrative responsibilities. Faculty members guided on nearly all matters, especially those related to educating the students. Shared governance, the sharing of institutional decision-making between faculty and administration, has been a cherished hallmark of higher education through the years. However, some individuals, including Eckel and Kezar (2006), suggested that in today's changing climate shared governance is being eroded. Eckel and Kezar suggested strong administrations with a business-model approach sought to transform higher education decision-making into a

top-down process. Ample literature existed that defined the historic and persistent theme of shared governance, as well as painted the picture of a shifting governance landscape in higher education.

Traditional Academic Decision-Making

Traditional academic decision-making is based upon the shared governance concept. It is highlighted by broad participation of constituents, especially faculty. The notion of shared governance is deeply rooted in the academy, and charts its beginnings to the earliest American institutions of higher learning, where faculty members served dual roles as professors and administrators. Millett (1968) described shared governance as “a pattern in which both faculty and administration exercise effective influence in decision-making” (p. 7). Among the central, historical tenets of the faculty role are teaching, research, and service. The service component entails efforts to benefit the institution, including participation in decision-making processes. Traditional academic decision-making utilizing shared governance is well-documented and is supported by organization theory, in that employees who are more involved in decision-making processes in an organization show positive gains in job satisfaction and performance (Floyd, 1985).

A variety of advantages and disadvantages surround broad participation in organizational decision-making. Advantages to broad participation include understanding and acceptance of decisions, commitment to decision implementation, understanding of objectives and action plans, team identity and coordination, and use of individuals’ expertise and analytical skills. Additional benefits of shared decision-making include empowerment, level of communication (clear understanding of how their contribution affects the organization), improved communication, increased

efficiency, increased quality, higher work place morale, and increased loyalty. However, while discussing contemporary research on faculty involvement, Miller (1999) suggested that the higher education community prepare for a paradigm shift as some experts foresee the need to radically change the way education is organized.

Broad participation disadvantages include that the process is time-consuming and not usable when an immediate decision is needed. Additionally, there is diffusion of organizational responsibility so that success or blame can be easily assigned. Moreover, the expectation for continuous participation may lead to a perpetual expectation even in areas that leaders do not desire. Finally, extensive use of participation may result in a leader being viewed as weak (Floyd, 1985).

Our current understanding of shared governance in American higher education comes from two major policy statements issued in the mid-1960s. In 1966, a joint document entitled “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” was released by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB). Additionally, in 1967 the American Association for Higher Education issued its report of the Task Force on Faculty Representation and Academic Negotiation (Floyd, 1985).

The AAUP/ACE/AGB statement stated shared governance should exist among trustees, administrators, faculty, students, and other groups on topics including “general education policy,” selecting a president and other academic officers, long-range planning, budgeting, external relations, and physical facilities. Particular emphasis with regard to faculty involvement was placed on the faculty having “primary responsibility for the

curriculum, methods of instruction, research, faculty status, degree requirements, and some aspects of student life” (Floyd, 1985, p. 13).

The Task Force on Faculty Representation and Academic Negotiation report also made specific recommendations on the faculty decision-making role. The report outlined decision-making in ranges along a continuum, with administrative dominance at one end and faculty dominance at the other, and with “shared authority” in the middle representing “effective influence” of both parties. Also of note in the report was the specific reference of delegation of decision-making authority to an academic senate and collective bargaining organizations, with variations from campus to campus (Floyd, 1985).

As the faculty role in decision-making has evolved, the role of the presidency has been debated over the years, with Cohen and March (1986) calling the position an illusion. They suggest that the president’s role is more often symbolic than significant, and that the president has limited control over the institution. This limitation of control was due to the potential overwhelming influence of outside events or the decentralized aspect of university decision-making.

The predominantly recognized decision-making processes outlined here were rational choice, bounded rationality, and the garbage can model of organizational choice. The garbage can model was discussed extensively in this study. The process of rational decision-making was defined by Chaffee (1983) as a conscious choice made by a central authority among simultaneously displayed alternatives. The choice must be based on existing values and on evidence that the chosen alternative will result in the realization of these values. She noted that the literature had suggested that decision-making at colleges

and universities was not rational in the sense that she had defined it and suggested that decision-making can fall into a number of categories:

1. Rational: directed by values, based on supporting data
2. Collegial: directed by consensus
3. Political: directed by conflicting self-interests and power
4. Bureaucratic: directed by traditional administrative patterns
5. Anarchical: directed by accidents of timing and interest

Chaffee noted that, in practice, a decision process was not likely to follow the pattern of any single model. She described decision-making as involving choice, process, and change. The members of the organization had a choice among alternative courses of action. Process was used to emphasize that decision-making was active, involving different people, and that it required time to unfold. Change came about as the result of an organizational decision (Chaffee, 1983).

Aside from the garbage can and rational choice models, bounded rationality provides another approach of decision-making analysis. Simon (1976) posited that human beings simply have a limited computational ability; they cannot comprehend everything. The human mind has limitations, as does the structure in which the mind operates. Therefore, when making decisions within the context of bounded rationality, Simon suggested that humans utilize heuristics—informal, rapid means of problem solving. Heuristics involve “boiling down” an issue to a more simple, easier to understand one, utilizing educated guesses, intuition, and common sense. These were especially useful when attempting to make a decision with limited time constraints.

Simon (1976) suggested that decision-making involved three steps: (a) the listing of all the alternative strategies; (b) the determination of all the consequences that follow upon each of these strategies; and (c) the comparative evaluation of these sets of consequences. Simon (1976) noted that, “It is obviously impossible for the individual to know *all* his alternatives or *all* their consequences, and this impossibility is a very important departure of actual behavior from the model of objective rationality” (p. 67).

Modern Academic Decision-Making

Modern academic decision-making entails an enhanced level of control by administrators and a reduced role of other traditional constituents, particularly faculty. This evolving model results in shared governance becoming more limited. A variety of factors today reshape the landscape of academic decision-making. The scope of the faculty role has evolved due to shifting institutional priorities and the addition of layers of administrative professionals in the academy. Globalization and the broadened community-based missions of colleges and universities have reset the standard for institutional authority (Eckel & Kezar, 2006).

Baldrige (1982) referred to shared governance as the lost “Magic Kingdom” facing a number of challenges to long-held traditions in the academy. Baldrige predicted the demise of shared governance for a number of reasons, including the reduced role and scope of the academic department, the rise of the professional university administration, tensions between senates and faculty unions, and the centralization of decision-making. While history teaches of professors sharing administrative roles, it is much more common today to have professionals serve in an administrative capacity—a

relatively new profession that did not exist during the infancy of the shared governance concept.

Market factors also push toward shifting models of academic decision-making, according to Eckel and Kezar (2006). Reductions in funding from the states to public colleges and universities mean more competition among institutions. Additionally, state funding reductions and tuition increases fuel an enhanced focus on accountability and transparency in higher education. Constituents want to know that finances are being handled in a sound manner, with concerns being addressed in the open.

The pursuit of new academic and auxiliary initiatives by colleges and universities for enhanced income also drives decision-making changes. The expansion into biotechnology and STEMM (science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine) research has been encouraged due to societal needs, the large capacity in these areas for research funding, and opportunities for technology transfer (Eckel & Kezar, 2006). As a result, revenue-generating units increasingly develop their own rules outside of normal institutional parameters (Eckel & Kezar, 2006). With new, externally-driven units lies a new consideration, that of the mission of the institution vs. new pursuits, pursuits that may or may not fall in line with the mission.

The effects of globalization are also changing the face of academic decision-making. Eckel and Kezar (2006) notes that many institutions sought to grow via partnerships and branch campuses. A number of branch campuses have been established internationally, and the advent of the Internet has made these realities much more accessible than before. With these additional endeavors, another layer of staff at the

mid-management level has arisen to create additional bureaucracy between faculty and administration.

The changing academic workforce is another reason for changes in decision-making. Eckel and Kezar (2006) noted that institutions were employing less full-time and more part-time faculty and tending to emphasize teaching over research and service for part-time instructors. With respect to traditional, full-time faculty, priorities were also changing. There was more of a focus on research, less on service, and an enhanced focus on entrepreneurial activities, including technology transfer and developing research concepts into commercial activities. At the same time, there was renewed public pressure to focus on teaching, as the consumer concept, the notion of providing a service (education) for the fee that students pay (tuition), drives what students require—classroom instruction. Hence the concept of shared governance was eroding as faculties did not have the time or inclination for service with their attention directed elsewhere (Eckel & Kezar, 2006).

Higher education decision-making has been besieged by what Eckel and Kezar (2006) referred to as organization “in which various units and offices are loosely coupled with each other and with the central administration” (p. 7). This “garbage can” model of decision-making was first promulgated by Cohen et al. (1972) and later expounded upon in a higher education setting by Cohen and March (1986). The garbage can model outlines “organized anarchies,” institutions characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. An alternative to various rational choice theories of decision-making, the garbage can model entails four independent streams flowing in an organization that do not necessarily interact: problems, solutions,

participants, and choice opportunities (Cohen et al, 1972). Eckel and Kezar's (2006) reference of the garbage can model highlights that academic decision-making "can seem unruly, and frequently resembles anarchy" (p. 8). They related that, due to this disconnect, information between units travels slowly and indirectly, with minimal coordination. To this end, tension arises between centralized and decentralized decision-making, as decisions happen independently and not across units.

The original garbage can model, including subsequent work on the model specifically in the higher education arena, served as the conceptual framework for this study. The topic is expanded upon later in this chapter, including an examination of its relevance in studying higher education merger decision-making.

Higher Education Mergers

Background

Academic decision-making was examined here in the setting of university mergers. No known studies have specifically centered around examining decision-making in university mergers, yet effective decision-making processes are critical to executing an organizational change of this magnitude. Academic merger literature is an evolving body, and two seminal books in the United States define contrasting perspectives and differing approaches. The first major text on the topic was *Mergers in Higher Education* by John D. Millett (1976). This book was an analysis of 10 case studies of college and university mergers. Very much a manual, a how-to for conducting a merger, the book even contained a check list for merger situations as an appendix. Millett suggested that most mergers of the day tended to occur with one or more of the institutions in financial disarray. This is contrasted by the more recent text by Martin and

Samels (1994), *Merging Colleges for Mutual Growth: A New Strategy for Academic Managers*. Whereas Millett noted that many mergers during the time he studied came to pass as a result of financial difficulties, Martin and Samels suggested that this should not be the case. In fact, they argued that considering a merger for this reason and this reason alone is not a wise course of action. Rather, they developed the model of merging for “mutual growth”—for the betterment of the two individual institutions—to be stronger together than they are apart. Mutual growth mergers are mission-complementary mergers, highlighting the need to be strategic about a decision to merge, and for managers to consider increased academic synergies and academic prestige over monetary solutions.

The mutual growth model as outlined by Martin and Samels (1994) was predicated on several core principles for executing the modern academic merger. Taking a step away from the bankruptcy-bailout model outlined by Millett (1976), Martin and Samels (1994) suggested that the mutual growth merger “does not merely reposition the institution within its natural category but develops an expanded institutional identity within a new category of colleges and universities” (p. 12). Core principles of merging colleges for mutual growth were outlined by Martin and Samels as follows:

- Enhance complementary missions
- Encourage mutual growth
- Strengthen academic offerings
- Strengthen financial base
- Stabilize enrollment and student market share
- Improve administrative efficiency
- Accomplish economies of scale
- Use public relations opportunities
- Expand alumni base
- Create new institutional synergies

Martin and Samels at the time of the 1994 publishing of their book, noted that

The small literature on mergers in public higher education with an institution-oriented focus can be divided into two categories: how-to essays that provide a laundry list of issues to be considered by institutions facing the prospect of merger, and more general studies that summarize specific merger agreements. Lacking in both approaches is an overall theoretical perspective for mergers as a dynamic, growth-oriented strategy. (p. 118)

In defining the various forms of merger, Chambers (1987) identified three higher education merger types. These were bankruptcy-bailout, mutual retrenchment of institutions with like academic programming, and mutual growth of institutions combining complementary offerings. Skodvin (1999) concurred with Millett (1976) that financial necessity was a main reason for many of the mergers in the United States. However, she suggested other reasons for a merger, including the mutual growth concept outlined by Martin and Samels. Skodvin (1999) noted,

A general strategy in many of the voluntary mergers has been the ambition to improve their strategic position in the higher education market. The main intention with state-initiated mergers was to restructure and reorganize part or the whole of higher education system. (p. 68).

Skodvin noted that the main force behind a merger was always some kind of assumed gain. These benefits could range from administrative and economic to academic. She suggested that many believed larger units would yield qualitatively stronger academic institutions, better management of administrative resources, and an improvement of physical facilities. Skodvin (1999) commented on anticipated cost savings, stating that there was an intention “to achieve economies of scale with regard to the number of administrators, and to get a more professional and efficient administration” (p. 69). However, Martin and Samels and others have expressed great reservation for using financial concerns as a primary reason for a merger. Studies showing cost savings as a result of mergers have not shown conclusive results of savings, and Martin and

Samels suggested that merging for the “right” reason meant merging for mutual growth benefits.

Skodvin (1999) additionally denoted the differences between integration and diversification strategies in higher education mergers. She posited that mergers where the intention was increased academic integration and cooperation (e.g., creating new multi-or interdisciplinary programs/fields) was usually much more controversial than in mergers where the main strategy was to diversify the academic profiles (e.g., a merger between institutions that complement each other).

Focusing on specific institutional mergers were dissertations by Mulvey (1993), Misite (1994), Zekan (1990), Searcy (1981), Winfrey (1989), and Howard (1980). Of these, the Mulvey and Misite studies stood out as lending significant amounts of information to the literature through their cross-case analyses of merger phenomena. Mulvey’s study included a review of 20 higher education mergers between 1964-1985. Mulvey (1993) concluded that,

Change was not managed, decision-making was top down and self-centered, crisis was not anticipated, power was used to dominate, conflict was divisive, planning was non-existent or poorly done, and implementation was characterized by limited strategies to facilitate the process. (Abstract)

Misite focused on human aspects and long-term ramifications of mergers in her examination of the merger of two private colleges in the New England area. The study found that, while desired outcomes such as stable enrollment and finances had been met, negative feelings and concerns lingered 5 years after the merger took place.

Going beyond case studies and focusing in on specific elements in higher education mergers were several studies including those by Deubell (1984), Jackson-Fobbs (1997), Radtke (1997), Rhea (2004), Chambers (1987), and McMahon (1984). Of

these, McMahon, Rhea, and Radtke looked at issues of organizational change and culture. Radtke found that a clear relationship existed between attitudes toward merger and perceptions of organizational culture, as positive views of the culture were significantly associated with optimistic opinions about the merger. Rhea also researched perceptions of merger participants and found that administrators were more likely to perceive the merger positively than instructional or support staff. McMahon used organization theory in a college merger to test hypotheses related to changes in formalization/standardization, centralization, complexity, and specialization. He found that the high disciplinary specialization of participants impeded the implementation of change because the disciplinary expertise did not include management. McMahon added that positive interpersonal relationships contributed to the resolution of conflict while combining the two organizations.

Finally, some dissertations have taken an international perspective, focusing on mergers outside the United States. Goedegebuure (1992), for instance, compared mergers in Australia and in the Netherlands, while Nyeu (2006) and Wan (2008) explored specific mergers in China. The Goedegebuure and Nyeu studies focused on mergers that were the result of major government restructurings of universities. Wan's case study found that the merger was largely a top-down process and highlighted the critical role of institutional leadership throughout the merger.

Internally-driven mergers. A key element of merger initiation is whether the merger is voluntary or forced by a third party. Skodvin (1999) and Harman and Harman (2003) suggested that voluntary mergers usually were more successful than forced mergers. Harman and Harman added that, "At the same time, behind many voluntary

mergers are often external threats or some degree of government incentive, pressure, or direction” (2003, p. 39).

An example of a mutual growth merger that received impetus from within the respective organizations was that of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) formed by the merger of the Medical College of Virginia (MCV) and the Richmond Professional Institute. This merger was effective July 1, 1968, as approved by the General Assembly and the Governor (Dabney, 1987). While the merger combined the two entities in 1968, MCV retained the use of its former name. It was not until 2000 that the VCU Health System authority was established, and in 2004 that the MCV hospitals and medical schools were given the name VCU Medical Center (VCU, n.d.).

While not a health science-related merger, another recent merger shared a commonality with other mutual-growth mergers examined in this study—that in New York City of the Polytechnic Institute of New York and New York University. Avoiding the circumstances of a merger with duplication of programs, this merger combined institutions that were complimentary in nature, as Polytechnic provided NYU with an engineering school. The merger was approved among the objections of some within the Polytechnic community. Polytechnic trustees questioned the decision, as well members of the Polytechnic alumni association (Arenson, 2008).

Externally-forced mergers. Forced mergers in Australian higher education have been examined by Grant Harman (1986). He examined the vast restructuring of Australian higher education between 1981 and 1983 through institutional mergers. Part of a federal restructuring, 30 Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), mainly dedicated to teacher education, were told that they would receive no federal funding after 1981

unless they merged with other higher education institutions. Harman noted this change as “a national attempt to deal with substantial system-wide problems . . . in a federal political system where the legal responsibility for most universities and CAEs lies at one level of government and funding responsibility lies at another” (Harman, 1986, p. 567). As precedent, Harman referenced mergers and closures as having been utilized extensively in the United Kingdom during the 1970s “to deal with problems of major contraction in higher education enrolments [*sic*] in non-university institutions” (Harman, 1986, p. 568).

A forced merger that has been under consideration for some time in the U.S. is the combination proposed between Portland State University (PSU) and Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). The impetus behind a PSU-OHSU merger came from the state legislature, specifically from one representative. This external push, however, was creating problems in the sense that the merger was being done “to” the institutions, not “by” them. As a result, the idea is received quite a bit of pushback from those affiliated with the institutions (Giegerich, 2005). State Representative Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland) introduced the measure in the 2003 legislative session to a cool response, again in 2005, and once again in 2007 for the third consecutive session. The debate continues, with levels of support in the legislature but not among the individual institutions, as the presidents for the two schools have been outspoken on the measure (Earnshaw, 2007). The presidents’ concerns centered around differing missions and cultures between the two institutions, as well as the process. Certain levels of collaboration between the two institutions have already occurred, and PSU President Dan Bernstine suggested that

discussions of a merger were premature. The resources required to enact a merger were also a concern (Giegerich, 2005).

Corporate involvement. Some mergers have grown with the influence of the corporate sector. This involvement has occurred at different points in different mergers—some at the onset and some later in the process. In cases involving corporations, the mutual growth concept applied not just to the academic institutions involved but also to the corporations receiving some benefit or competitive advantage as a result. Below are two examples of mergers that have entailed a corporate or third-party component.

A circuitous route of combining two autonomous medical schools resulted in the establishment of the Drexel University College of Medicine in 2002. Two independent medical schools merged in 1993 to form the MCP Hahnemann School of Medicine of Allegheny University of the Health Sciences, making it the largest private medical school in the country. Five years later, the parent corporation of the medical school, Allegheny Health Education and Research Foundation (AHERF), declared bankruptcy (*History of Drexel University College of Medicine*, n.d.). California-based Tenet Healthcare Corporation acquired Allegheny University's facilities in 1998 along with part of a larger acquisition of Philadelphia-area hospitals, clinics, and other properties belonging to AHERF. These assets were transferred to a newly created non-profit doing business as MCP Hahnemann University. After the asset transfer, Drexel University agreed to assume operation of the new University (*History of Drexel University College of Medicine*, n.d.).

In 2002, the Drexel University board of trustees voted unanimously in favor of merging MCP Hahnemann University into Drexel. The trustees approved an agreement between Drexel and Tenet Healthcare Corporation for a 20-year affiliation that continued the partnership between the College of Medicine and Tenet's teaching hospitals in the Philadelphia area (*History of Drexel University College of Medicine*, n.d.).

While not a merger, another partnership with a local healthcare provider involved collaboration with a higher education institution to start a new medical school. In April 2007, Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, and Beaumont Hospitals announced plans to create a new allopathic medical school (Lorenzi, 2008). The school admitted its first 50 students in the Fall of 2011 (Oakland University, 2011).

This unique partnership between Oakland and Beaumont combined resources at Oakland, such as strong undergraduate programs in the basic sciences, and a Center for Biomedical Research. Additional elements included Beaumont's 37 accredited residencies and fellowships and 431 accredited resident and fellowship positions as well as more than 850 ongoing clinical trials involving 50,000 patients (Lorenzi, 2008).

The first 2 years of the 4-year curriculum consisted of basic medical science in classrooms and labs on Oakland's campus. Students completed hospital rotations in years 3 and 4, with Beaumont Hospitals in the Royal Oak, Troy, and Grosse Pointe suburbs of Detroit as the primary locations for placements (Lorenzi, 2008). The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), the accrediting authority for medical education programs leading to the medical doctor degree in the United States and Canada, granted preliminary accreditation to the school in February 2010 (Oakland University, 2011).

Other mergers. A scan of current news media highlighted mergers occurring or being discussed frequently, with higher education mergers in the news almost daily. In the U.S., these discussions are occurring both at 2-year and 4-year institutions. Like the mergers previously discussed, initial decision-making and impetus for these mergers come from varied sources but increasingly from state legislators and other governmental officials. A grassroots effort is underway to merge the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University into one flagship university to become more competitive nationally and put less strain on state resources (Beitsch, 2010). Desirability and feasibility studies are planned for merging the University of Maryland and the University of Maryland, Baltimore (Villanueva, 2011). In 2011, the Longy School of Music, an independent conservatory, merged with Bard College, with leaders stressing that the merger was motivated by educational, not financial, factors (Kiley, 2011).

Participants

Central to the discussion of merger execution was an examination of the participants involved in the process. Specifically, the individuals involved in the early-onset period play a critical role. These participants were clearly outlined by Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001). These authors detailed the nearly exclusive involvement of presidents and boards of trustees in the early processes of a merger.

Excluding groups like faculty, students, and alumni in the early onset tended to occur because these groups can be opposed to a merger (Millett, 1976). The lack of participation by these groups can lead to constituents feeling slighted or ignored. Faculty members, in particular, may be upset by a lack of involvement, as well as students and alumni who remain active with the institution. A number of fears tend to develop in the

face of the uncertainty created by a merger, not the least of which are the survival of academic programs, faculty positions, issues of rank and tenure, compensation, and more. Eastman and Lang (2001) suggested that the nature of what a university senate discusses or acts upon depended on the governance arrangements in place. Eastman and Lang (2001) elaborated on the small number of key players in the early phases of the process, saying that individuals were brought into the fold as internal and external approvals and buy-ins were sought. “Once the merger has taken place, participation expands to encompass all the employees of the merged institution, who contribute to—or hinder—its operation as they carry out their various roles” (Eastman & Lang, 2001, p. 174).

The players in the earliest stages of a merger tend to be a very limited group of individuals. Eastman and Lang (2001) noted that,

In the first part of the negotiation phase, active participation is generally limited to those whose authority, expertise, or legitimacy is required to develop the merger agreement. At the outset, the presidents or heads of the institutions are typically at the centre of events. (p. 171)

Also involved are government officials in cases of publicly funded institutions. Finally, commonly involved as participants in the negotiations or as advisers to the negotiators are vice-presidents, representatives of potentially merging units, key functional managers (e.g., human resources, finance), and key staff (e.g., legal counsel).

Martin and Samels (1994) stressed that, during the early stages of a merger, one person should be designated as the CEO of the combined institution. Should this not occur, power struggles could severely hinder the progress of achieving the merger.

Martin and Samels outlined the role of the governing boards, noting that the board handled four common elements in a merger process:

1. Identification of merger as the best approach to support and enhance the mission of the institution in its achievement of academic excellence and other related organizational goals
2. Negotiation of a merger agreement or proposal with another institutional board and its internal constituencies
3. Approval of the merger proposal by board action
4. Implementation of the merger plan and assessment of its progress

In some cases, outside consultants are used to assist with executing the mergers. Millett (1976) noted that, in 3 of the 10 mergers studied in his book, outside consultants were retained to help develop the rationale for merger.

While individuals execute daily operations of an institution, this study examined decision-making at the organizational level. The garbage can model used in this study was an organizational model of analysis rather than an individual one. Indeed, this study examined the movements of key participants during the early onset period of academic mergers. However, what was examined was not how the participants reacted and reasoned individually, rather, how decisions developed among them. The typical key participants were outlined in the literature by Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001). These campus leaders functioned in institutions where the garbage can model may be in effect, thus factoring into their decision processes. How decisions were made within this complex system was in question.

Leadership

Effective leadership is critical to the implementation of an academic merger. Leadership can lend itself to maintaining the status quo or to enabling organizational

change. With regard to leadership styles, Estela Bensimon (1989) defined the difference between transformational and transactional leadership in an academic setting by stating:

Transactional leaders are depicted as accepting and maintaining the culture of an organization as it exists—its belief system, language, and group norms. In contrast, transformational leaders change organizational culture by introducing new beliefs and goals and by changing how group members define their roles. (p. 13)

In higher education, traditional academic decision-making may be linked to transactional leaders, while modern decision-making may necessitate transformational leaders.

While transformational leadership may be necessary in the long-term given an organizational change such as a merger, it may not be the most appropriate, at least not right away. Transformational leadership may cause too much friction at a time of major change because many colleges and universities are steeped in transactional cultures.

George Keller (1983) discussed an incremental approach to significant institutional decision-making by stating:

One of the reasons that management science had a hard time taking root in higher education was the thick, deep adherence by campus department chairmen, deans, vice-presidents, and presidents to incrementalism. While management science is rational—economic, incrementalism is partisan—political. Incrementalism holds that the world is not rational and people are often not rational. (p. 106)

Martin and Samels (1994) noted that “the transformational leadership provided by the overall chief executive officer will redefine many if not all of the existing organizational norms” (p. 63).

In describing the merger negotiation process, Harman and Harman (2003) suggested that strong, creative leadership and a strong shared vision were essential to merger success. Managing cultural differences is also necessary for effective merger negotiation and implementation. “Visionary, transformational leadership that is sensitive

to cultural factors greatly facilitates the merger processes” (Harman & Harman, 2003, p. 40).

Management

Martin and Samels stressed presidential involvement was integral to the success of the merger process. When combining two or more institutions with so many variables at play, presidents must be macromanagers. Presidents “must become the conceptualizer for the entire organization, including the combined governing board and faculty” (Martin & Samels, 1994, p. 64). Warren Bennis (1989) noted that “performing as a conceptualizer means more than simply being the organization’s idea person. Presidents as conceptualizers, both possess entrepreneurial vision and take the time to consider carefully the forces that will affect the destiny of the institution” (p. 17). Martin and Samels (1994) reinforced this point, saying that “in a mutual-growth merger, this role becomes even more fundamental, as the destiny of the institution must be redefined, as well as all of the present agreements affected by this redefinition” (p. 64). They went on to stress the importance of delegation and authority, suggesting that all subordinates must be appropriately empowered to cope with the vast array of details and unforeseen questions within a merger.

Mergers have been discussed as a new approach to higher education management. Martin and Samels (1994) referred to a mutual-growth merger as “an enormous management exercise” and suggested that higher education administrators cannot ignore “the advantages of appropriate principles of contemporary management science” (p. 65). They posited that institutional quality and survival depend on managerial effectiveness, and, in the absence of management strategy, one can see the vacuum of the “garbage can”

model of management as described by Cohen et al. (1972). This model was characterized by unclear goals and a general sense of ambiguity in direction of the institution, spurred on by a variety of constituents with varying individual and group agendas. Martin and Samels (1994) suggested that in a merger, “there is less time to address serious resistance and barriers to sound management practices. The chief executive officer consequently must devise a proven strategy to overcome any aspects of a traditional antimanagement syndrome” (p. 66). They went on to say that a simple strategy in mutual-growth mergers has been to “empower the faculty to manage rather than to be managed” (Martin & Samels, 1994, p. 66). Empowering faculty facilitates accountability while reinforcing the leadership role of the president, and balances the organization. Martin and Samels stated that mergers of the future will depend on new management structures. Because a growth merger is a comprehensive management exercise that cannot and should not be managed by administrators alone, Martin and Samels suggested that faculty be empowered to manage and collaborate in almost all merger activities, in concert with the new vision of the combined institution.

Culture

The study of culture is an important topic in examining university mergers. It can have a profound impact on the relative success or failure of combining two or more institutions. Merging cultures of one or more institutions is “a major challenge for leaders that needs to be handled sensitively and with relative speed” (Harman & Harman, 2003, p. 39).

Effective leadership is critical in merging divergent campus cultures into educational communities. Harman (2002) suggested that threats can be turned into

opportunities and effective leadership was paramount in assuring the success of a merger. She believed that the human factor should be uppermost in the mind of a chief executive of a newly merged institution to ensure growth in the post-merger period. Harman (2002) stated that, “Building morale, new loyalties and a sense of community means for leaders appreciating inherent and subtle differences of contested cultures and exercising sensitive judgment in managing conflict” (p. 111).

Like Harman, Locke (2007) posited that organizational cultures were critical to the successful integration of stakeholders as an unusually broad range of issues surface in a merger. While making this point, he noted that those going against the “grain” with management initiatives “are unlikely to achieve their aims because they fail to gain acceptance or ownership” (Locke, 2007, p. 85). He also attempted to define culture in organizations, saying that “organizational members are continually recreating and revising cultural phenomena in order to make sense of what is going on, communicate with each other and complete their daily tasks” (Locke, 2007, pp. 85-86). Locke noted that speech and behavior were the most obvious forms of expression, but behavior can include activity such as ceremonial events, exhibitions, formal communications, meetings, publicity, design, architecture, internal décor, and more. Organizational culture can be explored based upon stories or organizational sagas, symbols, language, rituals, vision, and myth.

Locke (2007) stated “that culturally sensitive management can enhance the possibilities of cultural change” (p. 87). Overall, Locke suggested that, while the leader of the institution needs to be sensitive to the two existing institutions, he or she needs to

foster a climate and develop resources that support the vision and goals of the new university.

Atmosphere and Process

During the early stages of merger negotiation, the limited number of participants lends a sense of secrecy to formal discussions. This notion is reinforced by Millett (1976) as he discussed these individuals, mainly presidents and trustees, who had a tendency to conduct negotiations in an atmosphere of confidentiality. Millett suggested that the determination to merge was made by the president with informal discussions with members of the board of trustees, and may be shared with the business manager or budget officer. Presidents tend to have little disposition to discuss the desirability of a merger with faculty leaders, student leaders, or community leaders; “the reason is the realization that any such discussion will become public knowledge and will likely lead to efforts to prevent the merger if at all possible” (Millett, 1976, p. 34).

Millett suggested that the second step in initial merger discussion was to approach the president of the second institution to ascertain receptivity to a possible merger, where the second president will follow the same pattern as the first in consulting with a few key members of the board of trustees and a few key administrators.

There is a disposition to avoid consultation with faculty and student leaders because of the fear of premature publicity, and because of the conviction that the matter is one appropriate for administrative determination. If the president of the second institution is receptive to the idea of merger, the process is launched. (Millett, 1976, p. 34)

Differences of opinion exist regarding the best means for control and execution of a merger. Initial merger management tends to be administered solely at the highest levels of the institution, subsequently filtering down. Skodvin (1999) described the strategies

involved, delineating the differences between “bottom-up” and “top-down” processes. She suggested that top-down processes were most common, in state-initiated mergers but tend to be connected to tensions and conflicts among faculty and staff. Conversely, processes that utilize bottom-up input tend to be more smooth and successful. Skodvin suggested this was the case because the newly merged institution had a better chance to create consensus among partners and because it was the best strategy to attempt to create a common identity among new staff members. Skodvin (1999) noted that, “It appears that mergers in general are characterized by too many ‘top-down’ processes and too few ‘bottom-up’ processes” (p. 76). In other bottom-up mergers with extensive open communication, “the skepticism and insecurity of participants was reduced by including them in the decision-making process where both advantages and disadvantages were discussed, and there was extensive use of informal face-to-face communication” (Skodvin, 1999, pp. 76-77).

If top-down processes tend to be the norm, a contrasting approach, a more participatory exercise, was envisioned by Harman and Harman (2003). While they suggested that the process should be as open as possible, they noted that this was not always realistic with confidential information and rapid progression of events. They stated that generating support from various constituencies was very important, and this necessitated sharing merger plans widely and promptly addressing rumors. Processes should move quickly, as delays increase anxiety levels and give opponents opportunity to organize against the merger (Harman & Harman, 2003).

Skodvin (1999) noted that “it can take up to ten years before the situation is normalized after a merger” (p. 70). “But the degree of tensions and conflicts with regard

to academic development is to some extent dependent on the kind of strategy that has been chosen” (Skodvin, 1999, p. 74).

Barriers to Growth

Many potential barriers exist to complementary growth in merging administrations from two institutions. Combining the varied components of each institution, in conjunction with difficult political situations, can create stresses in an environment joining varied cultures. Sensitivity is required by the chief executive to deal with these difficulties in an engaging manner, all the while moving swiftly during this early, heightened period of change. “Presidents cannot fully prescribe outcomes in the early stages of the process because new forms of productivity and commitment to the combined institution may take several years to develop, the product of sustained experimentation by the integrated administrative staff” (Martin & Samels, 1994, p. 73). Martin and Samels differentiated the merger of workforces in higher education with that of the corporate sector—mass layoffs and administrative firings were not tolerated well in higher education. The nature of colleges and universities lent itself to accepting “internal cultural differences” and indeed viewed this as “an indicator of their institution’s capacity for growth” (Martin & Samels, 1994, p. 73).

Skodvin (1999) outlined potential barriers in a merger setting, notably that the larger the differences between the institutions, the greater the possibility that the merger would be successful. This reinforced Martin and Samels’ (1994) suggestion that significantly different institutions complement each other more by not having duplicate programming, which can be a source of great concern and debate during a merger process. Institutions that do not duplicate academic programs are likely to merge with

less difficulty than institutions with duplicative programs. With respect to geography, Skodvin noted that proximity played an important role in the merger. “The most successful mergers took place between institutions which were physically not far from each other. The greatest problems occurred where the distances between the institutions were farthest and where there were also large cultural and academic differences” (Skodvin, 1999, p. 75).

Mergers have been known to fail, resulting in a “divorce” of the two institutions or the closure of the portion representing one of the pre-merger institutions. In 2000, Marymount College, a women’s institution, merged with Fordham University combining the shared Roman Catholic affiliation between the two schools. However, in 2005, Fordham announced that it would close the Marymount campus by 2007 due to falling enrollment and poor finances. In February 2008, Fordham sold the Marymount campus to EF Schools, Inc., a chain of private language-instruction institutions (Mytelka, 2008).

Harman (1993) described a failed merger at the University of New England. Harman spoke from experience as he was the University’s chair of educational administration as well as deputy chairman of the University’s Academic Board engaged in the discussions that led up to the merger. The University of New England in northern New South Wales merged with three colleges of advanced education to form a network university. Conflict characterized the merger process, and Harman explained that the merger failed because individuals from the various campuses lacked a harmonious working relationship, and engaged in criticism of one another. There were various understandings of what the merger entailed, and the legislative framework was criticized

as defective. Harman reported that UNE was to break into two universities no later than January 2004.

Economies

Central to a discussion of academic mergers is the topic of economies and potential cost savings. Millett (1976) frequently referred to examples of economies noting that often one institution was there to “bail out” the other financially. The main reason for mergers up to the mid 1970s, according to Millett, was to relieve one or more institutions in financial exigency.

Today, a great deal of speculation tends to occur regarding potential cost savings and economies of scale in higher education mergers. While cost savings was one of the main reasons outlined for merger by Millett, Martin and Samels suggested that, if this was one of the main reasons under consideration by potential merger partners, they were looking at the wrong reasons. Mutual growth and mission-complementary institutions should be the main reasons for merger, according to Martin and Samels. Some literature has explored the potential economies of scale in higher education mergers.

A number of areas exist for which potential savings could occur: staff (duplication of senior and administrators), premises (maintenance and staffing costs of superfluous buildings and deferred maintenance on buildings no longer in use), and other costs (duplicated book and periodical purchases, overlaps in central administrative costs, such as meetings, publications, degree ceremonies, etc.) (Fielden, 1991). For the most part, these potential economies relate to mergers where duplication of programs takes place. In the mergers with no duplication of programs (mission-complementary mergers), less savings are experienced, particularly with the reduction in use of buildings.

Mergers may produce extra costs including the staff (leveling of benefits, compensation, etc.), travel (when campuses have significant distance between each other), administration (unifying information technology systems, redesign of procedures, paperwork and marketing, legal and professional fees related to the merger), and premises (renovation to buildings, etc.), as well as the management time involved for all of these tasks (Fielden, 1991). Additionally, Fielden noted that it was difficult to accurately analyze potential cost savings because to do so would entail observing expenditures over an extended period of time and costs in higher education have been rising and fluctuating to an extent that would make such calculations difficult, if not impossible.

Examinations of economies in mergers suggested that

. . . few, if any, recurrent economies result. The only area where research might identify significant tangible savings is in the maintenance cost of new buildings or after the disposal of surplus property. In the largest area of cost, that of academic staff, economies depend not unexpectedly on academic decisions that may have nothing to do with physical mergers. (Fielden, 1991, p. 165)

Patterson (2000) examined economies of scale in higher education mergers and alliances through studies of the relationship between institution size and its operation at optimal efficiency. Noting that mergers in higher education increase the scale and scope of an institution, the author looked at the extent of financial benefit possible through mergers.

Patterson (2000) noted an Australian study that suggested “as a higher education institution grows, the average per capita cost declines, falling steeply up to about 2000 full-time equivalent students, continuing at a decelerating rate up to a critical size somewhere in excess of 10,000” (p. 261). This report “concluded that the size of the

institution is the major determinant of the level of average cost; and that both the number and size of institutions are therefore critical in determining the higher education system's average cost per student" (Patterson, 2000, p. 261).

Patterson's (2000) work supported Fielden's (1991) suggestion that few, if any, economies result from mergers. Patterson (2000) also noted, similarly to Fielden, that "The actual strategic costs and benefits can be very difficult to quantify" (p. 268). In the end, Patterson reflected on the other benefits of alliance and merger outside of finances, including best practice processes, transfer of knowledge, reduction in market uncertainty, increased student choice—all these are indirect to financial circumstances. While a large class can reduce expenditure per student, it can also be perceived as a reduction in the quality of education output (Patterson, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Overview

The garbage can model serves as an alternative to the two other major approaches of institutional analysis presented earlier in this chapter including rational choice (Weingast, 1996) and bounded rationality (Cyert & March, 1992; March & Simon, 1993; Simon, 1976). Rational choice theory involves the assumption that individuals choose the best course of action based upon surrounding alternatives and circumstances. Bounded rationality entails the concept that human beings have limited computational capacity and cannot anticipate all outcomes of a decision. Additionally, these two models of analysis involve decision-making at an individual level; the garbage can model outlines decision-making from an organizational perspective. The garbage can model

was originally developed by Cohen et al. (1972) based upon a computer simulation coded in FORTRAN, a computer programming language.

Cohen et al. (1972) suggested that in the garbage can setting

. . . an organization is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer, and decision makers looking for work. (p. 2)

These organized anarchies are characterized by three general properties: problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. The notion of problematic preferences was what Cohen et al. referred to as “a loose collection of ideas” in the decision situation and the reality of discovering preferences through action more than acting on the basis of preferences. The property of unclear technology is based upon the notion that organizational processes are not understood by its members and that it operates based upon trial-and-error procedures. The final property of fluid participation refers to the variation in time and effort that participants devote to various elements within the organization.

Universities were specifically noted by Cohen et al. as prime examples of organized anarchies, full of ambiguity. They suggested that,

University decision-making frequently does not resolve problems. Choices are often made by flight or oversight. Active decision makers and problems track one another through a series of choices without appreciable progress in solving problems. Important choices are not likely to solve problems. (Cohen et al., 1972, p. 11)

As previously noted, the garbage can model is an alternative to other rational choice models. Rational choice models suggest that decision opportunities first lead to the generation of alternatives, followed by an examination and evaluation of their consequences, and finally a decision. Cohen et al. suggested that this series of events was

often not what actually happened. Rather, decisions are the outcome of interrelations among four relatively independent streams (problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities). Problems are the concerns within the organization that require attention. Solutions are the product of individuals and can arise regardless of the existence of a problem. Participants are the individuals in the organization; they come and go depending on the choices made. Significant variation in participation occurs from the demands on the participants' time. Choice opportunities are "occasions when an organization is expected to produce behavior that can be called a decision" (Cohen, et al., 1972, p. 3).

The notion of the four independent streams lent credence to Cohen and March's (1986) suggestion that presidents have limited organizational control. In what may be reflective of traditional academic decision-making, the confluence of the four streams relegates the American college presidency to a "reactive job," with presidents "trying to reconcile the conflicting pressures on the college" (Cohen & March, 1986, p. 1). In this realm, partly due to respect for shared governance, decisions are more likely to flow from the bottom-up or elsewhere in the organization rather than top-down. Cohen and March (1986) stated that "decision making in the university seems to result extensively from a process that decouples problems and choices and makes the president's role more commonly sporadic and symbolic than significant" (p. 2).

Central to the garbage can model is the notion that decisions are made in three different ways (by resolution, by oversight, and by flight). In resolution, some choices simply resolve problems after a period of deliberation. With oversight, a choice occurs when problems are attached to other choices, "without any attention to existing problems

and with a minimum of time and energy” (Cohen, et al., 1972, p. 8). Flight choices are associated with problems for a period of time, until another choice arises. The problems are no longer associated with the choice, and the decision can be made. Cohen et al. (1972) noted that some choices involve both flight and resolution—“some problems leave, the remainder are solved” (p. 8).

Controlling the Streams

Cohen and March (1986) suggested eight basic rules for those who seek to influence the course of decisions in colleges and universities:

1. Spend time: Simply by expending energy and time, the individual is in position to exert influence. This shows others that the issue is important, the individual becomes a source of information, and increases the chance of being present when something important is considered.

2. Persist: Because a proposal was rejected once does not mean that it will be rejected again. Different players and circumstances circulate within the organization, and the resolution may be different another time.

3. Exchange status for substance: Individuals and groups in an institution tend to care more about their self-esteem and social recognition than about specific substantive outcomes. Institutional leaders can trade status for substance through involvement and place themselves in a strong position.

4. Facilitate opposition participation: Individuals outside of formal authority tend to hold significant aspirations for change. The engagement of dissenting groups in the decision-making process “is a more effective depressant of exaggerated aspirations than is a lecture by the president” (Cohen & March, 1986, p. 210).

5. Overload the system: The style of decision-making changes “when the load exceeds the capabilities of the system” (Cohen & March, 1986, p. 210). An individual should not be completely committed to any one project; an individual with many endeavors may lose any one of them but will not be stopped on all of them.

6. Provide garbage cans: Projects can become intertwined with a variety of other issues. Garbage cans can be provided for dumping wide varieties of problems. Conspicuous garbage cans attract a significant amount of garbage and are viewed as important. By placing the item in the garbage can, due attention can be given to the item by those viewing it as important. Projects of serious concern can then be dealt with after the issues of individual and group self-importance have played out.

7. Manage unobtrusively: To cause significant change going “against the grain” in an organization would require “an impossible amount of attention and energy” (Cohen & March, 1986, p. 213). A more sound approach would be to issue minor directives to “go with the flow” of the organization to reach desired goals. These actions affect many parts of the organization slightly rather than a few parts in a major way. Additionally, the inertia of these actions remains without further intervention, unless additional change is desired.

8. Interpret history: Organizations tend to put heavy stock in history as a basis for current action. However, keeping a sound record of happenings does not enjoy as much enthusiasm. “Participants in the organization should be assisted in their desire to have unambiguous actions taken today derived from the ambiguous decisions of yesterday” (Cohen & March, 1986, p. 215).

The rationale behind utilizing the garbage can model as a conceptual framework for this study was linked to the use of the aforementioned rules. By engaging in strategic utilization of these rules, administrators have the ability to influence the streams of the organization and exert more control. By doing so, the decision-making process can evolve into a top-down exercise, the process exhibited in modern academic decision-making. By managing relationships and more tightly-controlling the streams, significant influence can occur on this otherwise loosely-coupled system.

Critique of the Garbage Can Model

The garbage can model has not faced considerable critique, but it was criticized by Bendor, Moe, and Shotts (2001), with charges including calling it “complex and confusing,” “seriously flawed,” and suggesting it “lacks the rigor, discipline, and analytic power needed for genuine progress” (p. 169). Bendor et al. specifically discerned a difference between Cohen et al.’s verbal (or informal) theory and the computer simulation utilized in the original 1972 model. Bendor et al. (2001) suggested “that streams of solutions and problems cannot possibly be independent of one another” (p. 172). While offering this critique, they stopped short of saying the model should be completely disregarded. Rather, they suggested the theory be revised into “a parametric variant within the bounded rationality program. This would clarify the garbage can’s theoretical logic, give it a clear microfoundation, and provide it with real deductive power for pursuing its insights—all of which it now lacks” (Bendor et al., 2001, p. 170).

Despite the critique, the garbage can model served as the framework for many studies since its inception and continues to be utilized as a framework in a variety of social science studies. Olsen (2001) responded to Bendor et al. noting that the original

study was “a model,” not “the theory”—an acknowledgement by the original authors that their research was simply an option for examining organizational choice, not the definitive means for analysis. Olsen also defended the use of the original computer simulation.

Conclusion

The literature review focused on key elements of relevance to this study including higher education mergers, traditional and modern academic decision-making, and theoretical framework concepts through which to explore issues in this study. This background knowledge was integral to the understanding of the shifting trends in academic decision-making as well as the unique circumstances surrounding a higher education merger setting.

The next chapter explores the methodology that was used in this study, including the processes and subjects. Reasoning for utilization of these processes and subjects is detailed, making reference of the literature explored in this chapter. Concepts detailed here lend themselves well to the qualitative format of research that this dissertation utilized.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The limited research on decision-making and mergers in higher education sat the stage for this study. The purpose of this study was to examine decision-making during two academic mergers, events entailing major organizational change. Through the course of this research, decision-making exhibited through the earliest stages of the mergers was examined.

This chapter addresses the methodology for the study, including the research questions and design; the participants; and data collection methods, management, and analysis. Additional detail follows outlining the coding procedures and the validity and bias.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to learn specific, detailed knowledge of decision-making processes during the preliminary stages of two academic mergers. Organizational decision-making was examined from the onset of merger discussions to the point of legislative approval.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the methods of decision-making employed prior to the point when the merger was legislatively approved and by whom?
2. Do the methods utilized fall within or outside the framework of traditional academic decision-making?
3. What aspects of these methods align with the modern model of academic decision-making as described in the literature?

Research Design

This study was a natural fit for a qualitative design for a number of reasons. First, the notion of shifting patterns of academic decision-making was only recently being explored in the literature. The same could be said of academic merger research, especially examining from an organizational decision-making perspective. Second, the individual experiences of the study participants were examined to gain a rich perspective specific to each site. The mergers were experienced in a number of different ways by those involved in the early-onset periods, the time between when the merger was initiated to the point when the merger became public. These viewpoints were examined and similarities and differences categorized.

This research was a multiple instrumental case study, also known as a collective case study. This type of study was defined by Creswell (2005) as the examination of several cases that provide insight into an issue or theme. This study utilized interviews and document analysis to gather data about decision-making processes in a university merger setting. These data gathering methods were chosen due to the ability to glean rich, descriptive accounts of individual experiences. Additionally, each case institution had its own unique set of circumstances surrounding its respective merger. Individual institutional analysis allowed examination of the specific institutions prior to examining cross-institutional findings. The use of multiple cases may be more holistic, engaging an issue from a broader perspective than other qualitative approaches (Glesne, 2006). In a multiple instrumental case study, Glesne suggested each case was written up in a context-situated study and then a cross-case analysis was undertaken to look for patterns across cases.

The goal of this study was to examine issues of higher education executive decision-making through the context of university mergers. The interviews and document analysis allowed for examination and categorization of responses reflecting elements of Cohen et al.'s (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice. The examination of these elements identified different forms of decision-making ranging from the traditional forms described by Millett (1968), Chaffee (1983), and Miller (1999) to the more modern forms outlined by Eckel and Kezar (2006).

This study utilized general, open-ended interview questions on-site and via telephone with the participants as suggested by Creswell (2005) and Glesne (2006). This type of inquiry lent itself, as Creswell suggested, toward an exploration where little was known about the problem and when a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon was desired. This study of higher education merger decision-making utilized individual visits with higher education leaders, allowing the researcher to experience the context of the setting.

Case Study Locations

The two sites examined in this study shared commonalities as well as some significant differences. The key commonality, however, was that they had been through mergers of the same type—a comprehensive, metropolitan, doctoral research university merging with a freestanding academic health science institution. These institutions were selected because they shared this common experience and the mergers took place within the past 6 years.

These mergers were both consolidations of public, state institutions: The University of Toledo (UT) with the Medical University of Ohio and the University of

Colorado at Denver (UCD) with the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

Founded in 1872, UT was older than UCD. Both institutions shared a similar number of students. The workforces were relatively similar in size, with UCD employing a somewhat larger workforce than that of UT. Both institutions maintained a clinical operation.

University of Colorado Denver

Calling it a consolidation, the University of Colorado at Denver joined with the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center on July 1, 2004. The combined institution was known as the University of Colorado Denver (UCD) and has its main campus in downtown Denver, with the Health Sciences campus moving from Colorado Boulevard to the decommissioned Fitzsimmons Army Medical base in Aurora, now called the Anschutz Medical Campus (University of Colorado Denver, 2005a).

The benefits of the consolidation as highlighted at the time included academic and research opportunities as well as new sources of research funding. It was also noted that, “during challenging economic times it is beneficial to have the funding diversity that comes from combining a campus that derives monies from research and clinical enterprises with a campus that derives monies from tuition” (University of Colorado Denver, 2005b). Highlighting “programmatic opportunities,” the consolidation was seen as facilitating the creation of a School of Public Health (University of Colorado Denver, 2005b).

Approximately a full year of discussion and planning took place prior to the decision to move forward with the consolidation. University of Colorado (CU) President Betsy Hoffman brought findings of a task force on the consolidation to the CU Board of

Regents for review in June 2003, with the Regents giving the go-ahead for consolidation in August of that year. That same summer, UCD Chancellor Georgia Lesh-Laurie planned to retire. Her retirement presented an opportunity to solve the consolidation issue of dual institutional leaders because a single chancellor was to head both campuses. The task force indicated the potential for enhanced visibility and image for the institution with a consolidation, as well as enhanced access to outside funding and research opportunities for graduate students. However, Hoffman cautioned that the regents should not view the proposed consolidation as a cost-cutting measure (Jones, 2003).

Today the University of Colorado Denver services 29,000 students with 119 degree programs in 13 schools and colleges. The Downtown Campus houses the College of Architecture and Planning, College of Arts & Media, the Business School, School of Education and Human Development, College of Engineering and Applied Science, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Public Affairs. The Anschutz Medical Campus houses the School of Dental Medicine, School of Medicine, College of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, and the Colorado School of Public Health (University of Colorado Denver, 2008). Graduate School administration spans both campuses. The institution has a workforce of more than 11,000 (including hospital employees), an annual budget of nearly \$1.2 billion, and the clinical operation services 500,000 patients yearly (Wilson, 2006).

The University of Toledo

On July 1, 2006, a merger occurred between the University of Toledo and the Medical University of Ohio. UT and the former Medical College of Ohio at Toledo (MCO) coexisted as separate educational entities in Toledo, Ohio, for more than 40 years.

Ironically, the institutions initially could have been one, as was proposed during the early 1960s at the time of MCO's founding (Committee on Re-Establishment of the University of Toledo Medical College, 1954). From 1964-2006, a cooperative, yet separate, existence prevailed for the two institutions. The Medical College of Ohio changed its name to the Medical University of Ohio at Toledo (MUO) on July 1, 2005 (McGinnis et al., 2007). It would only hold this name for 1 year prior to the merger.

The University of Toledo was founded in 1872 as an arts and trades school. Jessup Wakeman Scott donated 160 acres of land to grow the university, which occupied several locations in the downtown area before moving to the Bancroft (Main) Campus in 1931. As a municipal institution, a bond levy was passed by Toledo voters in 1928 to raise funds for construction of the first two buildings on the campus, University Hall and the Memorial Field House (McGinnis et al., 2007).

Growing fiscal troubles in the City of Toledo while UT was experiencing a significant amount of growth prompted UT to become a state university on July 1, 1967. Utilizing new revenue streams from the state, a significant physical plant expansion occurred subsequently (McGinnis et al., 2007).

Shortly prior to the 2006 merger, UT was classified by the Carnegie Foundation as doctoral/research extensive, with more than 20,000 students enrolled in more than 250 academic programs. At that time, UT had eight colleges: Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Health and Human Services, Law, Pharmacy, and University College. Employing more than 5,000 people, UT was the fifth largest employer in the City of Toledo with an annual budget exceeding \$300 million (McGinnis et al., 2007).

The Medical College of Ohio at Toledo was formed when Governor James Rhodes accepted Ohio Board of Regents' recommendations to consider a medical school in Toledo, and a bill was approved unanimously by the Ohio House of Representatives in November 1964 and by the Ohio Senate 1 month later. On December 18, 1964, Governor Rhodes signed legislation to establish the Toledo State College of Medicine (renamed Medical College of Ohio at Toledo in 1967) (Floyd, Kroll, & Hussain, 2001).

The entering class of 32 medical students began studies at MCO in 1969 with a 59-member faculty and 10 administrators. Additionally, 175 community physicians assisted as volunteer faculty. Shortly thereafter, the nursing and allied health schools were established. Classes were first held in temporary classrooms while the permanent campus was constructed in south Toledo. Minoru Yamasaki designed the campus, with the Health Science Building the first to be completed. Mulford Library and the Health Education Buildings were completed next, along with the hospital which opened in December 1979. Subsequent growth at MCO in terms of enrollment, academic offerings, research, and clinical care coincided with additional physical growth. Additional academic and clinical buildings were constructed circa 1990, when the original plan for the campus was completed. The Advanced Technology Park of Northwest Ohio opened adjacent to the MCO campus in 2000 (McGinnis et al., 2007).

In 2004, MCO enrolled 1,600 students in four schools: medicine, nursing, allied health, and graduate studies. Employed were 3,384, making MCO the 10th largest employer in Toledo. More than half of these employees were dedicated to the hospital, with the other half serving the college. The campus budget was \$289 million per year. The 319-bed hospital anchored the clinical enterprise with a Level I trauma center, along

with a rehabilitation hospital and a child and adolescent psychiatric hospital. Yearly statistics for the clinical operation included 8,000 admissions, 25,000 emergency department visits, and approximately 200,000 outpatient visits (McGinnis et al., 2007).

As of Fall 2008, UT enrolled 22,336 students in 11 colleges and 357 academic programs. UT employed 6,831 faculty and staff and had an annual budget for 2007-2008 of \$730 million (The University of Toledo, 2008). Clinical statistics for 2008 included 12,446 inpatient admissions, 185,815 outpatient clinic visits, and 29,879 Emergency Department visits (The University of Toledo, 2009).

Participants

Participants from each institution were chosen through critical sampling, a type of purposeful sampling used when studying an exceptional case to learn a great deal about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). This type of sampling was used to identify those who were involved during the earliest stages of the three mergers, the period of time between when the merger attempt was initiated to the point when the merger became public. Participants included presidents, board chairs, board members, legislators, provosts/vice presidents, faculty members, students, and others. These individuals were identified by Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001) as key merger players and decision-makers. A total of 43 participants were interviewed for this study. Six participants were interviewed at the pilot site, Nova Southeastern University. Seventeen participants were interviewed at the University of Toledo and 20 participated from the University of Colorado Denver. Additional participants were added as the study progressed based upon recommendations of participants, with participants added until no new information was learned. This is referred to as snowball sampling (Creswell, 2005).

Individuals were selected for interviews based upon one or more of the following criteria:

1. Held an executive level or board of trustees position in the university.
2. Identified by executive level administrators or trustees as playing a role during the earliest stages of merger discussions.
3. Identified in documents as a key player in the merger during the early-onset period.

The population consisted of on-campus and off-campus individuals.

Data Collection

Interviewees were contacted by telephone and electronic mail to explain the research, invite them to participate in the interviews, and to schedule appointments for interviews. Interviews were conducted in person in Ohio, Colorado, and over the phone. Informed consent documents were presented to each participant for his or her signature at the time of the interview. The interviews lasted from approximately one half hour to two full hours. When possible, they were conducted on-site in the participants' campus offices. If the participants were no longer employed at the institution, interviews took place at their home or over the phone. The interviews were semi-structured, audio-taped with permission, and then transcribed verbatim after the interview. After this point, coding took place, followed by analysis of data.

In the case of phone interviews, informed consent documents were provided to participants and returned by facsimile or electronic mail. Follow-up interviews took place via electronic mail in instances such as an interview cut short due to time constraints or an issue that was not clarified in full. Study participants were asked to

suggest additional interviewees based upon the established criteria at the time of the interview. These individuals were then contacted and invited to participate in the study if it was determined that they may yield additional relevant information to the study or bring a new perspective. Should interview questions change as the interviews progress, previous participants were posed the revised questions by phone or electronic mail. There were no changes in interview questions during data collection at the two full study sites.

Document Analysis

Documents selected for this study included those formulated or utilized during the early-onset period of the mergers. The sample of documents selected for review included desirability and feasibility studies and consultants' reports; formal documents representing preliminary and binding decisions; media articles and reports; and personal notes, journals, and accounts by the interview participants. According to Creswell (2005), documents can provide valuable information that lead to understanding of critical phenomena in qualitative studies.

Interview Instrument

This study utilized one-on-one interviews with the researcher and the individual study participants. Open-ended questions were utilized to encourage the participants to broadly share their thoughts. The interview questions for this study were designed to allow flexibility in the way that they were posed to the participant, with the option to modify, discard, replace, or add additional questions over the course of the interview. This flexibility was suggested by Glesne (2006) so that the researcher could adapt

questions based upon the specific responses and circumstances. Glesne also suggested the use of different kinds of questions, asked from a variety of angles.

The interview questions (see Appendix A) were developed based upon the research questions—specifically aimed at responding to the query of a changing landscape of higher education decision-making. The initial questions were designed to gather basic information about the individual and what role he or she played in the merger. The latter questions focused on the actual decision-making processes utilized and how these processes were similar or dissimilar to other institutional decisions. These interview questions allowed for responses directly lending critical information to the research questions. Utilizing the garbage can model, analysis revealed if the participants were attempting to manipulate the four key streams as outlined by Cohen and March (1986), thus, changing the dynamic of the decision-making process. The interview questions allowed for analysis utilizing Cohen and March's eight basic rules for effecting change in a garbage can setting. It was then evaluated if individuals were exercising the specific strategies or related activities as suggested by Cohen and March to wield control in a garbage can setting. Results showing the use of the aforementioned rules or variations thereof were examined to understand if there was a concerted effort to exercise administrative control in the institution as well as a display of significant top-down decision-making processes.

Documents were utilized in the study in multiple ways. Documents were reviewed before the interviews to help identify key interview participants as well as during the interviews to allow participants to reflect on key merger events. Documents were used to corroborate and triangulate the interview data, making findings more

trustworthy (Glesne, 2006). Documents also helped to inform the interview and provide the historical and demographic information unavailable from the interviews. Creswell (2005) added that documents provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them.

All relevant merger documents were examined from archives at the participating institutions. The documents included desirability and feasibility studies, memoranda of understanding, definitive agreements to merge, and official legislation. The two public universities' documents were public record and were obtained without difficulty. Key elements in the documents were references to personnel actions, decision processes, and methods of campus and community engagement. Interview participants recommended additional documents for analysis during the interview process.

Pilot Study

The pilot study took place at NSU. The purpose of this portion of the study was to pilot the interview questions and refine them for use at the two main study sites. Participants at the pilot site included six individuals selected based upon the same criteria as those selected at UT and UCD. After responding to the interview questions, the participants were asked about the questions to ascertain their strength in seeking the desired information. Interview questions were revised based upon this feedback with the updated questions utilized for the two case study sites.

Nova Southeastern University resulted as a merger between two private entities. NSU is the youngest among the three overall institutions in the study, with a similar number of students to the other institutions and a similar size workforce as UT. NSU

sees a smaller number of patients annually than the other two institutions, as it lacks a hospital.

Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences merged to become Nova Southeastern University on January 1, 1994. Nova University began as Nova University of Advanced Technology in 1964, and the name changed to Nova University in 1974. Nova was chartered as a graduate institution in the physical and social sciences. Over time, Nova added programs in law, education, business, psychology, computer science, oceanography, social and systemic studies, and hospitality. Nova became known as a leader in distance learning programs, starting its first off-campus course of study in 1972. Today, field-based programs are located in 32 Florida cities, more than 21 states, and select international sites including the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Jamaica, Korea, Mexico, and the United Kingdom (NSU, 2008). Nova Southeastern University is known for serving large numbers of adult students, and today is serving a growing traditional undergraduate population. Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine was founded in 1979 and opened in 1981. Southeastern later added Colleges of Pharmacy, Optometry, Allied Health, Medical Sciences, and the College of Dental Medicine (NSU, 2008). At the time of the merger, Southeastern had 1,200 students (Bousquet, 1993). Post-merger, NSU enrolled about 13,300 students and offered 99 degrees (Moore, 1993). Revenue was \$135 million and NSU employed 1,800 (*Many seek spotlight*, 1993). Tuition at the time was nearly \$8,000 a year for a full-time student (*Merger of universities*, 1993).

Currently, NSU is the largest independent institution of higher education in the Southeast and the sixth largest not-for-profit independent institution nationally. As of 2007, NSU educated more than 24,000 students per year with more than 98,000 alumni.

Data Analysis

Coding is an emergent, human-based process and codes for this study were developed as the interviews and document analyses progressed. As Glesne (2006) suggested, I first developed major code clumps to sort the data based upon the research questions. These major code clumps initially came from the literature, followed by emerging consistencies in the responses of interview participants. For example, key code clumps included groupings such as “pre-merger climate,” “merger implementation,” “participants,” and “post-merger reaction.” Then sub-codes were developed within each major code. For example, sub-codes under “merger implementation” included “study and evaluation,” “outreach and education,” “decision-making processes,” and more. The “participants” code listed sub-codes of all constituent groups at the institutions. These data codes were then developed into categories, followed by themes that framed the discussion and conclusion sections of this dissertation. Categories are major groupings of codes that help to organize large portions of data. The themes are the most broad, overall analyses. These themes developed within and across case institutions.

The qualitative analysis software program NVivo was used for analysis of data. This program has the capability to sort and analyze a wide variety of media files. NVivo can code documents and work from transcripts. While auto-coding, NVivo searches for keywords and phrases that have been specified by the user. I developed the initial keywords and phrases based upon common themes revealed in the literature. Additional

codes were developed as the research advanced based upon frequent and relevant responses from participants. Document analysis was achieved through importing the documents and storing and coding them in the same manner as transcripts (QSR International, 2008).

Data collection and data analysis proceeded simultaneously using a constant comparison data analysis method that allowed the researcher to focus and shape the study as it proceeded (Glesne, 2006). Creswell (2005) referred to this as an inductive process. Based upon Creswell's definition, specific elements were examined and sorted into broad categories. These categories were generated and connected by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories.

Verification of Interpretation

It was assumed that those participating in the interviews for this study were truthful and open. Their words were transcribed verbatim and interpretations drawn from those words. Reasonable conclusions, grounded in the literature, were drawn from these interpretations. To maintain consistency and internal validity, member checks took place inviting the participants to review their interview transcripts and to dispute or correct any mistaken information. Member checks occurred by sending the transcripts to the participants via electronic mail, allowing for their responses to be sent back in the same manner. Follow-up interview questions were posed via electronic mail and telephone. Additionally, participants had the option to decide post-interview if they wanted a portion of their interview to remain private, with that information kept confidential and not be included in the data analysis.

Personal Experiences and Bias

My personal education and experiences affected this study. I may have bias for any of the study sites because I worked at an institution that went through a merger. Additionally, I have been significantly involved in one out of the two case institutions as well as the pilot institution. At UT, I earned my undergraduate and master's degrees, and am earning my doctoral degree. I was also employed at UT for more than 6 ½ years, working in the Office of Alumni Relations during the time of the UT-MUO merger.

My involvement at one of the case institutions gave me an understanding of its history and culture as well as contacts for gaining interviews. However, this involvement may have created biases in my examination that did not exist in my examination of UCD. As an employee of one out of the two institutions, working in the area of institutional advancement, my role demanded a positive presentation at all times to the public. Advancement officers, by virtue of the nature of the profession, constantly work to present the institution in the best light possible. While I was trained to act with a purely positive approach at this institution, I recognized the need in this study to present all perspectives, even if they were less than positive.

In overcoming personal bias, trustworthiness and credibility are essential elements of a qualitative study. Credibility was enhanced in this study on cross-case analysis through member checking and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants had an opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy, while triangulation occurred through balancing varied perspectives and themes from site to site in the final analysis. Themes generated within case institutions had the benefit of drawing from multiple interviews

and documents. Generalizations realized across the institutions developed based upon the multiple site perspectives.

Final Report

Results and conclusions were presented as case study accounts of decision-making processes in each merger, with impressions and themes carried throughout the cases. Common themes across the two cases were examined and detailed, originating from the interviews and documents. These themes created a broad understanding of how decision-making processes evolved.

Chapter Four of the study presents the findings from the data gathered. Themes are detailed within individual case institutions and across the entire study. Sub-themes are noted under each main theme. Finally, the results of the study findings are summarized, setting the stage for discussion of these findings in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Results

This study examined the decision-making processes that occurred during two university mergers. A qualitative method of inquiry was employed using interviews and document analysis. This chapter begins with a review of the purpose and research methods of the study and background information on the participants. A summation of activity at the pilot site is presented next. As a multiple instrumental case study, the individual case study sites are then presented separately followed by a cross-case analysis including major patterns of decision-making that is explored further in Chapter Five.

The two case analyses are presented in a similar manner and in relatively equal depth. Each begins with a section on the institutional background and historical development, followed by the governance structure. The factors leading to the mergers are then explored. Extensive discussion follows on the decision-making processes, including the participants who were involved in those processes. Minority viewpoints and other related issues are expressed in a section titled “concerns.” Each analysis concludes with post-merger reaction and detail regarding outliers, those cases that, on the surface, appear to be the “exception to the rule” that is emerging from the analysis.

This study utilized personal interviews as the main instrument for data collection. Interviews were conducted at a pilot site to determine if the interview protocol needed revision. Subsequently, interviews were conducted at the two case study institutions. Purposeful sampling was utilized to choose primary participants based upon their involvement in the early stages of merger deliberations. Additional participants were added based upon the recommendation of primary participants. Document analysis also served as a reinforcement of and supplement to data gathered in the interviews. Relevant

merger documents such as desirability and feasibility studies and consultants' reports were obtained from both case study institutions.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to learn specific, detailed knowledge of the decision-making processes used during the preliminary stages of two recent mergers.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the methods of decision-making employed prior to the point when the merger was legislatively approved and by whom?
2. Do the methods utilized fall within or outside the framework of traditional academic decision-making?
3. What aspects of these methods align with the modern model of academic decision-making as described in the literature?

Participants

A total of 37 participants were interviewed for this study. Seventeen participants were interviewed at the University of Toledo (UT) and 20 participated from the University of Colorado Denver (UCD). The participants at both institutions represented a broad cross-section of constituents. The positions referenced here were the positions that the participants held at the time of the mergers. University of Toledo participants included 5 administrators, 4 faculty members, 3 trustees, 1 regent, 1 state legislator, 1 community member, 1 staff member, and 1 student. Thirteen administrators, 4 faculty members, 1 regent, 1 community member, and 1 student participated from UCD.

Table 1

Number of Study Participants

Role	University of Toledo	University of Colorado Denver
Administrators	5	13
Faculty	4	4
Staff	1	-
Students	1	1
Board of Trustees	3	N/A
Board of Regents	1	1
Community Members	1	1
Legislators	1	-
Total	17	20

Note. Dash indicates interviews were not conducted within this constituent group; N/A indicates participant role not applicable at institution

Interviewing Experience

The experience interviewing was rewarding for several reasons. First, the vast majority of those contacted to request interviews agreed to participate in the study. Very few either were not responsive or declined to participate. Many participants were eager to be involved based on the value they perceived in the study. Several individuals said that “this is a story that needs to be told.” Several were very proud of their own efforts in the merger or those efforts of a group of individuals and took the opportunity to praise others. Effecting the mergers, a rare event in higher education, became a sort of medal or credential for many, especially at UCD. Four members of the UCD administrative team went on to secure presidential positions at other institutions. I was generally treated with warm regard and respect from the participants, with many asking to receive a copy of the completed study. In addition to the participants’ eagerness, most of the interviews

yielded a generous wealth of information as nearly all participants seemed to be very open and forthcoming.

Document Analysis

Several documents were analyzed from each case study institution (see Appendix B). The difference in the types of the documents was reflective of the processes that took place at each institution. Significant documents from UT included the memorandum of understanding between the presidents of the two merging institutions, statements of support from various campus constituent groups, and proponent testimony given as part of the legislative process. Important documents from UCD included detailed study reports from the desirability and feasibility committees and a faculty survey. Independent consultants' reports from both institutions were analyzed. The qualitative research software program NVivo served as a repository for the documents and a means for coding and analyzing them, similar to the way that interview transcripts were stored, coded, and analyzed.

Use of Qualitative Database and Analysis Software

After the interviews were conducted, transcribed, and edited, coding took place in NVivo. NVivo allowed for a wide variety of media to be stored, cataloged, and analyzed. For the purposes of this study, it was used to store and analyze the interview transcripts and documents gathered from the case institutions. Codes and attributes were maintained in the program and were used to examine the data. A priori codes from the literature and the pilot study were utilized, and new sets of codes were developed from circumstances unique to UT and UCD. While NVivo served as a repository for data and the codes used to analyze the data, the vast majority of the coding was done manually. Aside from

limited searches for word frequency, coding took place by the researcher on each interview transcript and document. Major a priori code groupings such as “merger implementation,” “participants,” “pre-merger climate,” and “post-merger reaction” were retained, with additional codes and sub-codes added. Code groupings and other relevant combinations of codes coalesced into categories for a broad examination of the data. Once all data were coded, queries were run in NVivo across one or more codes, or codes in conjunction with attributes (i.e., what members of the administration [an attribute] said about the process [a code]). In the end, themes were drawn based upon the categories and their relation to the research questions and the literature. For example, categories including process, decision-making, participants, and leadership related to the theme of *avoidance of conflict*, while categories including process, decision-making, hindrances/concerns, and timeline related to the theme of *momentum*.

Pilot Site: Nova Southeastern University

Nova Southeastern University (NSU) served as the pilot site for the study. Six participants were interviewed at NSU, including 5 administrators and 1 university trustee. The pilot site served as an opportunity to test the instrument and the interview questions, as well as to experiment with the qualitative computer software program, NVivo, and work to develop a priori codes. While major revisions were not needed on the interview questions following the pilot site research, one of the questions was modified slightly to help participants understand the intent of the researcher. Several pilot site participants had difficulty understanding question #7, “Describe typical pre-merger decision-making processes on the yet-to-be-merged campuses.” The purpose of this question was to ascertain a baseline of decision-making processes prior to the mergers. Rephrasing the

question to ask the participants to set the merger aside for a moment and consider decision-making processes prior to that point helped in understanding the question. Experimentation with NVivo was very helpful, as was the development of a priori codes. Many of these codes were used in the analysis of the two full study sites.

Case Site Analysis: University of Toledo

Data collection at UT was the second of the three institutions in the study. Fourteen interviews were conducted in-person in the Toledo area in the summer of 2010 and three were conducted over the phone during late summer and early fall the same year. The majority of the documents for analysis were obtained prior to any of the interviews.

Institutional Background and Development

The University of Toledo is part of the University System of Ohio. The system is public, led by a chancellor and governed by a board of regents appointed by the Ohio governor. The system includes 14 universities and 23 community colleges. Each institution functions autonomously with its own board of trustees and administration. In 2007, legislation reduced the powers of the board of regents and created the position of chancellor, who reported directly to the governor, giving the governor more direct control over higher education.

The University of Toledo, historically known as a commuter institution, has emerged to serve broadly a diverse population of students from Ohio and beyond, currently with capacity to house 4,000 students on campus. The Main Campus is characterized by a broad range of academic programs, student life experiences, and Division I athletics. The university historically has won acclaim for its programs in engineering, law, and pharmacy.

The former Medical University of Ohio (MUO) is one of seven medical schools in Ohio. Founded in 1964, the institution also offers degrees in allied health fields and related health professions. A university hospital, now known as the University of Toledo Medical Center, serves as a teaching hospital for students and the community.

Governance Structure

The UT Main Campus has historically been home to an extensive shared governance structure, though it has been challenged in recent years, as commented upon by study participants. Faculty, staff, and students have generally been consulted on major institutional decisions through structures including a faculty senate, faculty representatives to the board of trustees, a local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a professional staff association, student government, and more. The membership of university-wide committees regularly included representatives from the various constituent groups.

Approximately one-third of the participants, particularly faculty, commented upon significant challenges to the shared governance structure that took place from 1999-2000. This period included an 18-month presidency that was characterized by major public strife among constituents and the administration. Participants spoke about a fear on the part of faculty and staff of the autonomous control of this administration, and described shared governance processes that were quickly eroded in favor of an administrative, top-down approach that was supported by the board of trustees. Following this presidency, the next president, who led until the merger, restored many shared governance processes and worked to restore administrative faith in constituents, according to participants including faculty members and trustees. However, some faculty members suggested that

the damage was not entirely repaired and had concerns about the current administration and its management style. Speaking about efforts of outreach to minimize perceptions of top-down control, a former chair of the UT board of trustees described his working relationship with faculty and student representatives:

The faculty wanted the whole shared governance thing. I liked working with [the faculty senate president] a great deal; [the faculty union president] was a little more difficult, because of his leadership in the union. I would meet with them one on one separately with the president's permission, because effectively that could have been undermining the president. We had candid and open conversations, you know. I don't know how they feel, but I always felt that we respected one another. We could agree to disagree. I think they listened to my point of view. I would listen to their point of view. I tried to keep them informed in the process. I tried not to surprise them. I didn't care what the union thought, but I did want to involve the faculty senate. If it was around student affairs, I did want to talk to student government and see what was going on. Now, we [the board of trustees] were ultimately going to make the decision and I didn't go through the exercise of soliciting information just to give it a good appearance, I mean there were things that people said that changed my mind.

Approximately one-third of study participants commented upon inherent common differences in decision-making between health science campuses and traditional academic campuses nationally. These differences were reflected in participants' suggestions that the UT Health Science Campus had embraced less of a participatory decision-making culture than traditional, predominantly undergraduate institutions. There had been a faculty senate, now merged with its counterpart from the Main Campus, but faculty members from both campuses commented that its endeavors had not been as public and vocal as that of the Main Campus. Participants, including faculty on the Health Science Campus, mentioned that this trend of less participatory decision-making processes on health science campuses compared to traditional academic campuses, could likely be traced to the additional functions that health science campuses serve—clinical

practice and research. Faculty members have extensive duties aside from teaching that occupy their attention.

Factors Leading to Merger

As referenced in merger documents, including the Ryan Beck & Co. report, the UT-MUO merger was driven primarily by desires for enhanced collaboration, synergies, and prestige, though financial and political factors also played a significant role. Calls from politicians and others across the state, as commented on by participants such as legislators, trustees, and regents, referenced a desire to reduce duplication and maximize collaborative relationships between institutions. Merger proponents saw the merger as an opportunity to satisfy both of these two major concerns. Additionally, the pre-merger UT president had experience with mergers at other institutions that led him to believe the combination could be successful in Toledo, as he saw it to be elsewhere.

Political context and financial issues. State support for higher education in Ohio had been on a dramatic slide downward in the years leading up to the UT-MUO merger. These financial constraints forced institutions to raise tuition and make significant budget cuts. One participant, a member of the Ohio Board of Regents, spoke of state politicians and other government officials who continuously called for institutions to become more innovative and collaborative and less duplicative and competitive with other state institutions. While the calls for greater efficiencies focused on collaboration to lesser degrees than a merger, the merger satisfied these calls to the highest degree. Perhaps this was why, as commented by several interview participants, that during the legislative process to approve the merger the timeline for approval was expedited; there was not a single vote against the merger legislation, and not a single

person spoke out against the merger during formal legislative hearings. In the end, while university leadership and the consultant's report prepared by Ryan Beck & Co. touted the strong institutional desires for synergies and prestige as the main drivers for the merger, satisfying financial and political pressures were close secondary goals, stated or implied. Several participants spoke of enhanced political clout of the combined institution due to its larger size post-merger. A former chair of the UT board of trustees remarked in the interview about budgetary challenges and reductions in state funding, and the potential synergies that could be realized from both financial and prestige standpoints. Two faculty members discussed in their interviews the efficiencies realized with the larger size of the combined institution. A faculty member on the Main Campus commented on the efficiencies that could be had by having a single administration, though he pointed out that the current administration had more vice presidents at the time of the interview than were at the two institutions individually at the time of the merger.

The former chair of the UT board of trustees spoke of the enhanced prestige possible by realizing synergies between the institutions. The prestige and clout factors were also commented upon by a faculty member on the Main Campus, noting the institution post-merger to be the third largest university in Ohio in terms of budget, thus, giving the institution more weight politically at the state level. Similarly, a faculty member on the Health Science Campus remarked on financial issues, reducing duplication of services, and political weight:

Although our mission is academic, somebody's still got to pay the bills . . . there are some potential advantages to not having redundancy. Instead of having two security forces, you've got one security force. Instead of having two maintenance forces, you've got one maintenance force, human resources, health clinics, student and faculty health clinics, IS [information systems]; there's just a lot of opportunities to eliminate redundancy and thus become far more efficient.

Couple that with the fact that there were dwindling state resources, the size of our institution would improve our position at the state level with regard to having at least some influence on the way dollars are being spent. I think there was a concern about decreasing financial resources and a need for belt-tightening.

The UT president at the time of the merger summarized the obvious nature of the opportunity that existed pre-merger:

One of the big things that stands out to anybody that's involved in higher education at that [executive administration/trustee/legislator] level, that here [in the same city] you have two state-supported, free-standing institutions and it just looks kind of ridiculous to see that.

Desire for synergies and prestige. The primary reasons given publicly in support of the merger were potential synergies and enhanced prestige as a result of the combination. Some participants referenced collaboration between the two institutions prior to the merger including early admission into the MUO MD program for academically successful UT undergraduates and shared programs in nursing, bioengineering, and public health. There was also research partnerships realized between the two institutions prior to the merger. Some participants suggested that greater collaborations could result from the merger. A faculty member on the Health Science Campus remarked about simpler institutional processes as a result of the merger:

The people saw the opportunity for synergy, that there could be more sort of multi-disciplinary programs. For example, we had always been able to do things with people over at UT [Main Campus] if it made sense, but if you wanted to do a research project that involved people from the University of Toledo, you had to go through two different IRB processes, which [the merger] obviously would streamline. There would be more, I think, interaction between the people on the two campuses.

Several administrators commented on the desire for enhanced institutional prestige as a result of the merger. The president of the combined institution remarked about the role and importance of a medical school as part of a comprehensive university:

Although the legislators were hoping to save money—the fundamental argument was not to save a lot of money. We saved some money, but the fundamental argument was that if you choose the US News and World Report top 10 universities in the country, all of them have . . . a medical school and a clinical arm.

An administrator on the Health Science Campus echoed the influence of the US News and World Report and added that, “the reputation of both institutions was important to the board of regents, to the legislature, to the community, etc.” A faculty member on the Health Science Campus echoed aspirations that the combination would place the university on a different plane with more prestigious national institutions:

My understanding is we’re only one of 10 or 15 universities in the nation that has as many colleges under one umbrella as we do, and so while you always wonder is bigger better, I think the University of Toledo is a big institution, but it’s certainly not huge by west coast or east coast standards.

A past president of MUO and current faculty member remarked on the potential for enhanced institutional stature at state and national levels, as well as the possibility to attract more renowned scientists and clinicians and generate more grant dollars.

Knowledge of other mergers. While not widely known and discussed during the UT-MUO merger, other mergers served as an example, at least for selected participants. The former chair of the UT board of trustees referenced an awareness of the consolidation at UCD, though the trustee suggested that it was not used as a model for the UT-MUO merger. Of greater significance were the experiences of similar mergers at other institutions by the outgoing UT president. He had been involved previously with two universities that had merged with free-standing medical schools. He remarked:

When I came to Toledo in 2001, one of the first things that just stood out to me was the separation of the medical university—or the medical college at that time—from the university. I knew from [my past] experience [at other merged institutions] that there was reason to believe that the medical college and the university could, and should, merge. So, from the very first, even before I came

here, I was aware that this situation existed and thought that if there was one thing I could do at the University of Toledo is to bring about that merger—that's what I was going to do.

In the end, while academic and research synergies were promoted publicly as the main reasons for the merger, a majority of participants acknowledged that financial issues were a driver at least in a minor way. Financial and political pressures for collaboration may have been the impetus for initial merger discussions, however, natural collaborations and synergies took center stage as the merger entered the public sphere.

Decision-making Processes

Most participants at UT described the merger decision-making processes to be less participatory than normal institutional decision-making processes. Considering that the decision to merge was outside the norm of everyday decisions, it may be expected that the process would be different. The difference in decision-making processes from typical university decisions was most evident during the early stages of the merger conversation. During the latter stages, endorsement of the process was sought from key constituent groups. This endorsement, however, did not include deliberation on the question of whether to merge or not merge but simply entailed a vote of approval endorsing the concept of the merger. The following section reports findings related to the participants and processes in the merger.

Participants. As commented upon by virtually all study participants at UT, the range of individuals involved during the early stages of UT-MUO merger deliberations varied from being very limited at the onset to very broad leading up to legislative approval. A select few individuals, including the two university presidents, were involved from the earliest discussions. As the process went on, additional members of

the administration and select trustees and other community members became involved. After the merger became public knowledge, there was relatively broad participation by campus constituent groups including faculty, staff, student, and community representative organizations. This participation, however, was very limited and generally was restricted to the issuance of statements of support endorsing the merger, as evidenced in a review of merger documents.

Executive administration. Early direction of merger processes was led nearly exclusively by executive administration, including the two university presidents and selected vice presidents and provosts. Several participants referenced past discussions about potential mergers between the two institutions and at what level they occurred. Even relatively new administrators knew of the historical relationship between the two institutions, which was described and put into modern context by a Health Science Campus administrator:

It was my understanding that there had been discussions going on for several decades, indeed dating back to the founding of the Medical College of Ohio. . . . In the early years I am told—this was of course in the early 60s—there was some discussion about building the medical college on the University of Toledo campus and incorporating that into a single institution. For a number of logistical, political, historical reasons of which I never knew, the decision was made not to do that but to found a separate university a few miles south and to build the medical school and then university hospital on that campus. So this was sort of a recycled set of discussions empowered by increased board of regents' interest, increased legislative interest and championed by the respective presidents of the two universities and the respective boards of trustees.

The former UT president presented a merger proposal to a past MCO president. The past MCO president explained that, “Because the institution was in the middle of a national search for a permanent president, at that time it was felt by the board that it might not be the right time and perhaps we should wait until we have a permanent position.” These

previous failed attempts at merger set the stage for the two university presidents at the time of the merger to look upon current realities and synergies and decided to move forward with the study of the concept of the possible merger. The two presidents conferred with trusted administrative colleagues on their respective campuses as well as with key members of the boards of trustees to decide to move forward with the study. One former MUO administrator described his executive-level counsel provided to the new MUO president at that time:

I . . . provided him with a historical perspective because I had been at this school since 1982, and part of our conversations over that two year period . . . had been about was historical relationship between MUO and the University of Toledo. In those discussions, I talked about some previous attempts—I talked about some programs that were already merged, such as a nursing program. I talked about why MUO was created as a separate institution from the University of Toledo, even though they were only three miles apart and were both state-supported institutions; and I talked about one very prominent failed attempt at merger in the mid 1980s when the president of MCO had applied for open vacancy and presidency of the University of Toledo.

Subsequent to initial conversations between the two presidents, their board chairs, and limited other individuals, a decision was made by the MUO board of trustees to retain Ryan Beck & Co. as a consultant to study the merger. A member of the Ohio board of regents, who was a former UT trustee, was also involved in early discussions, though the specifics of the regent's role were not confirmed uniformly by the two presidents. A past president of MCO suggested that this regent had made personal desires clear for some time on the MCO campus to see the two institutions combined. During the period of merger discussions, UT and MUO enhanced existing collaborations by sharing an administrator. UT had a vacancy for an administrator for government relations, and the MUO government relations administrator assumed the position handling duties on behalf of both institutions.

Board of trustees. Select members of the board of trustees became involved relatively early in the merger deliberations, specifically the board chairs. A former chair of the UT board of trustees indicated that a series of private conversations took place between executive administrators and members of the boards. This trustee discussed having private conversations with the UT president about the notion of merger, and suggested that the MUO president “was having similar conversations with [his] chairman of the board at that time.” This trustee never had a conversation with the MUO board chair but thought that “the two presidents were talking to each other, reporting back to their chairmen and at the point that it was moving down the line.” While initial board involvement was limited to the chairmen, acknowledging a variety of preconceived notions and perspectives was critical when the process expanded to the entire boards.

The former UT board chair described a political dynamic of superiority with the two boards in the early stages of discussion, with the MUO board being less enthusiastic than the UT board, perhaps because, as he suggested, MUO “looked down on UT a little bit.” He noted that some believed that “MCO somehow was superior in prestige, etc. than was UT.” The dynamic of superiority needed to be worked through enough for the board to make decisions about core merger issues, such as “who was going to run the university, the MCO board or the University of Toledo board.” Difficult decisions such as these, impacted by political dynamics, needed to be resolved in order to move forward. The former UT board chair believed that limited participation by trustees in the merger process was necessary for successful implementation for two reasons. First, if discussions of a potential merger took place with the board as a whole, the issue would, by state law, have to become public and the board was not yet ready for that. Second, the

more trustees who were involved early on in discussion and decision-making, the greater the risk of the issue becoming public. Noting that “we didn’t have a good history with people keeping their mouths shut on important issues,” the former board chair still sought out board members with whom to speak. Specifically, “I would consult with . . . previous [UT board] chairs who were still on the board at the time.” The same individual commented that conversations with the full board did not begin until after these initial private conversations were completed around the beginning of 2006. Conversations began then: “because we wanted to get it done before the end of the fiscal year. We wanted to get it done before I was off the board. We wanted to get it done before [the UT president] retired.”

Consultant. The relationship that UT and MUO had with the consultant that studied the merger was limited. Officially, the MUO board of trustees exclusively commissioned the study with Ryan Beck & Co. Findings from the study were later used by administration representatives from both institutions in support of the merger. The MUO president also took a copy of the study on a personal visit with the publisher of *The (Toledo) Blade* newspaper. Commissioning the consultant’s report, according to the MUO president, was “to put some objectivity into the process, to get an outside third-party view.” The Ryan Beck & Co. (2005) report recommended the merger, noting potential benefits including:

- Improved rankings
- Enhanced research funding potential
- Improved faculty recruitment and retention
- Improved student recruitment
- Enhanced fundraising capability
- Improved financial performance
- Synergies and savings due to elimination of duplicative costs and programs

- Greater ability for public/private partnerships and
- Many other benefits. (p. 2)

The former UT president remarked that the consultant's report reinforced all the basic ideas that were informally discussed about the merger. He said "I thought it reflected accurately the opportunity, as did [the MUO president]." He was concerned about how the report would be received by those not in the initial conversations, and "felt much better about the fact that this was an MUO/MCO study rather than a joint study so that there was no way in which it could be said that we influenced this because they paid for it." The report was received in draft form in the early summer of 2005 and kept as a confidential draft until it was finalized. Initial merger players were given an opportunity to comment on the draft. Later in the summer it was formalized and submitted to the MUO board for their consideration. A member of the board of regents and former UT trustee, who was pleased with the consultant's report, described its usefulness in moving the conversation into the public arena:

That report was helpful in identifying the synergies and identifying what were the good aspects of this and what were the downsides of this. That was used to help us with talking points when we went beyond the three of us to our board chairs and then eventually to the board.

Constituent groups. According to study participants, the various constituent groups across both campuses were engaged virtually not at all during the early stages of merger discussions. By the time the concept for the merger became public, central issues had already been decided, including the decision to merge (though not yet approved by the boards of trustees), the name of the combined institution, and leadership of the combined institution. Campus constituent groups did not have significant participation in the process until several groups including the faculty senate, unions, and student

government issued statements of support of the merger leading up to the official merger approval by the boards of trustees and the legislature.

Legislators and legislature. As described by participants including legislators, regents, administrators, and trustees, involvement in merger processes by individual legislators and the full Ohio legislature was limited to legislation development and political support. The fullest extent of participation included the official legislation enabling the merger, approved unanimously by the Ohio House of Representatives, Senate, and governor. Selected representatives from the Northwest Ohio legislative delegation were involved prior to introduction of the bill and assisted in drafting the legislation. Members of the UT and MUO administrations, along with a representative from the Ohio board of regents, met with the Northwest Ohio legislative delegation to plan the flow of the bill through the approval process, ensuring that it would take place in a rapid manner. Securing legislator involvement and buy-in with the process took place immediately following the same process with members of the Ohio board of regents.

Timeline. The timeline for the UT-MUO merger was very brief. Once private discussions began in earnest, and subsequently moved to the public, the process was rapid. There were limited public conversations and forums about the merger, and it quickly moved through the various approval stages with the boards at the institutions, the board of regents, and the legislature. Of particular note was what several participants described as an extremely fast-track process that the bill to effect the merger took in the Ohio legislature. A recurring theme discussed by participants was that of momentum. As the pace rapidly increased with more and more individuals expressing their support, few challenges occurred as critics of the merger were an extreme minority.

The former UT president noted that private conversations took place between the UT and MUO presidents from when the MUO president took office in 2004, and that the private conversations between the two presidents related to the merger escalated through the spring and summer of 2005. The Ryan Beck & Co. consultant's report commissioned by the MUO board of trustees was released in September 2005. After this point, discussions came into the public sphere with open forums and newspaper articles. After January 1, 2006, the legislative process to approve the merger began in earnest, coinciding with and following statements of support from a wide range of campus and community constituent organizations.

The desirability study conducted by Ryan Beck & Co. (2005) suggested that the merger be considered but that a feasibility study needed to be conducted as a next step in the process "in order to truly determine whether such a combination is viable" (p. 28). It continued:

Before the combination is instituted, the post-combination structure needs to be analyzed in detail. Once it is determined that this structure is viable, a plan of combination must be developed and approved by the appropriate authorities. Once approved, the process may move forward. (p. 28)

As commented upon by the former UT president, this step was never taken.

The rapid process undertaken with the UT-MUO merger was a topic of conversation with several of the interview participants. The general notion shared by participants that were administration and board members was that the process needed to be rapid in order not to be scuttled by typical decision-making processes within the institution. This decision, participants suggested, was far too important to have it potentially impaired by extended, drawn-out processes that let many individuals in on the merger conversation. Speaking of the rapid, exclusive process being by design, the

former UT president remarked about the need to avoid prolonged discussion that could center more on potential drawbacks than benefits of the merger:

When [the MUO president] and I talked about the process we had to go through, first of all, we knew that the complexity of this could kill it, because if you really tried to engage everybody in a year-long conversation on this thing, and listen to everybody, you would never get there because the negatives can shake the confidence of the positives.

Central to the speed of the process, participants including administrators and other individuals involved early in the process commented, was the limitation of broad involvement by campus and community groups. The former UT president spoke of the possibility of campus constituents organizing opposition and possibly mobilizing *The Blade* to cover a story based upon the constituents' position, with the opportunity for *The Blade* to "blow it up." Speaking to the notion of utilizing speed to prevent organized opposition from fomenting, the former UT president continued:

So we knew that while there would be opposition, if we gave everybody time to organize, that we were reducing the chances of the success of a successful merger process. So, move quickly. Get the support of those you need. Get all those groups I talked about—brief all of them on it. Ask for their support. In the case of the unions, we needed to formalize that agreement. Then the faculty senates—to get them on record, that was part of it. And then move quickly with the legislature.

The former UT president described a critical question regarding the choice of who to include in merger discussions—a limited number to maintain the expedited timeline and avoid derailment or a broader set of individuals representing the many voices of a campus community. Recognizing that "there are those that you really do need their support," the former UT president remarked:

You needed the unions on this. From a pragmatic point of view, you had to have it. In effect, the only voices we actually legitimately had to have were the voices of our trustees. But we knew in order to get that, they wouldn't vote in a positive way if these other groups, the senates, the unions, foundations, and others were

voicing strong concerns. So, we went through as quickly as we could. We briefed them. We answered all of the questions we could. In most cases, we felt their support to go ahead with this. On a few occasions we heard some naysayers but not anything big enough to say, well, let's rethink this. We just kept moving.

As previously mentioned, the legislative process was very rapid. Representatives from both of the institutions testified in support of the merger, including union and community leaders. The author of the bill, a member of the legislative delegation for the Ohio House of Representatives, spoke of the need for a fast legislative process to ensure approval, but one that was sensitive to various perspectives and concerns of community members. The representative commented on his role in keeping the process moving at a rapid pace:

My role was to make it go quickly in the House, create a lot of momentum behind the merger, to make sure that I had an argument that I could explain to members of both parties as to why we're doing what we're doing—if people thought they were going to derail it, the area that would derail it would be in the legislature. So, I did have conversations with people who were opposed to the merger, and those were folks that I went and met one-on-one, met with them just to listen to what they had to say, took their perspective in it, tried to incorporate them into the process. And so it was managing—my job was the train was already moving and it was moving, not at a break neck speed, but it was moving. My job was to make sure I laid down enough rail to get us through the next mile, so the train could get moving and actually pick up a little bit more speed.

Outreach and education. A series of important outreach attempts were made by key participants during early merger discussions. These attempts secured the endorsement of the concept of the merger from individuals who were critical to the successful implementation. Critical contacts included the MUO president with the publisher of *The Blade* and a member of the board of regents with state politicians. This member of the board of regents commented about the politicians and their unification in support of the merger:

Once they saw that this was actually taking hold, everybody jumped on the bandwagon. Everybody was afraid to get on the bandwagon for fear that they were going to get politically assassinated. Once they saw that this actually had traction, then everybody is out there waving a flag [in support of the merger].

Initial key player involvement. As previously discussed in this chapter, the early discussions of the UT-MUO merger centered on a small group of insiders including the two university presidents, the two chairs of the respective boards of trustees, a member of the Ohio board of regents, and the chair of the board of regents. Both of the members of the board of regents were from Northwest Ohio and served as critical advocates for the merger, according to the former UT president. They assisted with getting buy-in at the state level, including on the board of regents and in the legislature. They helped to coordinate meetings with the Northwest Ohio legislative delegation and initiated the legislative process in conjunction with members of the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives. The former UT president described the regents' roles:

Both of them were not only supportive, but as the process evolved, became strong advocates for this and just made themselves available to help in any way they could. I felt that both played a very positive role in this and I don't think it could have been done without them. Either one of them probably could have stopped it if they had chosen to. But, I think both of them saw what I think was the wisdom of it and agreed with it, supported it, and advocated for it, and became spokespersons for it in Columbus in their respective associations there.

Open forums/statements of support. As previously mentioned, there was limited outreach to constituent groups during the early phases of the UT-MUO merger.

Participants stated that, after the merger became public, there was a moderate amount of engagement with campus and community groups, mainly through town-hall style open forums that served as question-and-answer sessions. Participants, such as the former UT president, noted that by this time major core issues of the merger had been resolved, including the name of the institution, presidential succession plans, and major campus

and facilities issues, such as non-consolidation of the separate physical campuses. Other significant issues would be addressed with a host of merger work groups that met in the months prior to and after the effective date of the merger.

Administrations from the two institutions made significant efforts to elicit support from critical constituent groups including the faculty senates, faculty and staff unions, student governments, and community organizations. All of these major representative groups issued resolutions in support of the merger, and these statements of support proved to be valuable to the administrators when they went to Columbus to testify in support of the merger. When asked about the importance of the open forums regarding the merger, the former UT president responded that if the forums would not have taken place:

I think there would have been a much bigger fear factor. I think by the time we got to the governor's signing of the bill, there was strong support across the community. I was hearing from, I would say, hundreds of people. They just never thought it could happen. This is an impossible dream. It should have happened 30 years ago. I mean, it was overwhelming. I think had we not touched base, any one of these groups could have [impeded the process]. . . . Would they have? I don't know, but they could have made it more difficult. I think both of us [the two presidents] felt that it was important that they be briefed on it and brought into the conversation and allowed to articulate their concerns. But I can say honestly that none of the concerns that were mentioned in any of these meetings were sufficient to stop a merger of the two institutions.

Asked if the statements of support from the constituent groups were critical to the successful implementation of the merger, the former UT president responded that they generally were, though he did not think that they were necessary. He elaborated on the importance of these statements:

Whether or not we actually had to have it [the statements of support]? I think we could have, with the support of our two boards, which was contingent upon all these other groups because they feel a responsibility to these other groups. But I think if we had had the support of our two boards, we could have gone directly to

the legislature and gotten their support for it. But I think the way we did it gave our boards confidence that they were not making a major mistake and that they had the support of the groups that they felt responsible for.

Concerns. Due to the rapid nature of the UT-MUO merger process, there was not much time for extensive deliberation about concerns. There were, however, several key concerns that were articulated by participants. Various participants, including members of the faculty, board of trustees, and the community, had concerns regarding the presidential succession plan. Faculty on Main Campus had concerns about the rapid timeline of the process and the merger study not being given due diligence. Faculty members on the Health Science Campus had concerns about the perception and prestige of UT bringing down the reputation of MUO. Members of the UT board of trustees had concerns about taking responsibility for an academic medical center and the issues that came along with that, financial and otherwise. A critical concern that was articulated by many participants, especially those from the inner circle at the beginning, was how *The Blade* would react to merger discussion.

The wide range of individuals concerned about presidential succession included a former chair of the UT board of trustees, who felt obligated to go along with the selection of the MUO president as the leader of the combined institution to ensure the process moved forward. This critical decision weighed perceived personal and professional characteristics of leadership against an assumed necessary outcome—that of approving the selection of the MUO president. The trustee explained his concerns about the selection of the president:

I wondered if a surgeon who was in the Marine Corps could really run an organization that was very sensitive to collaborative governance and I was concerned about that. But I also was willing to set aside those concerns, because I felt that without him being the leader the thing was not going to go. You know,

other board members had the same concern. But in the final analysis, where style might have been the issue—now, the faculty would not agree with what I am going to stay—where style might have been an issue for me, it was more important to get the job done and still have competent leadership. There was no question in my mind that [he] would have been a competent leader. I didn't know if he was going to be an effective leader.

While faculty participants mentioned that few faculty members questioned the concept of UT and MUO merging, more expressed concern for the process and a perceived lack of study and evaluation. One faculty member described those concerns in the context of the combination of two large organizations:

Frankly, I think a lot of us felt like this thing was done very quickly with not a whole lot of due diligence. You have got two hundred million, three hundred million dollar companies coming together—normally there would be quite a lot of due diligence over what was going to happen and how it was going to work and it did not seem that that really was happening. It was sort of more like it sounded like a good idea, let's do it, sort of thing rather than sitting down and figuring out from a business perspective how things were going to work.

Reputational concerns were on the mind of some on the Health Science Campus. An historic perception of low-ranking, inferior academics on the UT Main Campus was held by some on the Health Science Campus. A faculty member on the Health Science Campus spoke of concerns regarding the perception of UT and how the combination of the two institutions “would be cheapening our degrees, [and] as a result [MUO] would be less prestigious” than it was.

Some people thought [the merger] would cheapen the degree. There were these old jokes about Bancroft High that had been around for years. It [UT] was largely seen as an undergraduate institution that was open enrollment, you know, sort of ignoring the graduate programs and the College of Law and the College of Engineering and Pharmacy and so on. But [for] a lot of people, the perception was that this was a two-bit commuter school and some of the medical students were upset, you know the ones that were in their second and third year, because they said that the degree when they came out to get it would be from UT and they didn't like that.

Participants at UT, including members of the board of trustees and faculty, expressed concerns regarding taking on the university hospital as a result of the merger. Operating an academic medical center was a foreign concept to them, and there was apprehension about the responsibility, particularly due to the volatile nature of health care finances. An Ohio state legislator described how assuming control of a hospital and all of its related costs and responsibilities was threatening to some at UT. Some people said:

“Look, we’re a university; we don’t run a hospital, and we have an interesting dynamic here in Toledo with our healthcare systems,” . . . MUO had had some real significant and public financial problems too, that they were bleeding red ink about five or six years before. So you had people saying, “Well, of course they want to merge to UT because it’s more revenue for them to underwrite what’s going on with the hospital.

A faculty member from Main Campus had similar concerns about the university hospital being a drain on the institutional budget and suggested a financial firewall as protection for the Main Campus academic enterprise in case of a lawsuit against the hospital.

The concern that was articulated by early merger participants as the most significant was the potential reaction to the merger of *The Blade*, Toledo’s daily newspaper. This concern was characterized by fear and apprehension as to how the newspaper would react, with the potential to scuttle the merger. Several participants spoke of the history of *The Blade*, with the publisher’s family having significant roles in the founding and growth of MUO and consistent negative coverage and editorials over time related to UT. The former UT president described the historical relationship with *The Blade* and apprehension over the way that the leadership of the newspaper would react and cover the merger:

There was always the concern about *The Blade*. That was kind of a little cloud that followed us all the way through this. Would they stay out of it? How were they going to cover it? What would their editorial position be? I did not have a

good relationship with [the publisher of *The Blade*]. I mean, that was true through my whole tenure there. Was it bad? Sometimes I felt like it was. But most of the time we just didn't have a relationship as some thought we should have had.

The former UT president felt that coverage or non-coverage, or support or disapproval, by *The Blade* could literally make or break the merger process. If *The Blade* covered the merger in a negative light, it could concentrate merger opponents to an overwhelming degree. He believed that “the concerns about *The Blade* were real,” noting the editorials that had been published about previous attempts to merge:

There was one, even before we had these final discussions that basically said “over our dead body.” So that was a real threat. People involved in the decision-making on this were concerned that *The Blade* would go after them individually and personally.

Noting that some of the trustees had huge stakes in the community, the former UT president commented that the last thing they wanted, or could even afford, would be to have *The Blade* go after them on a personal basis. He thought that there was general agreement from most, if not all, of the board members that the merger was the right move to make. However, he said, “It really came down to ‘can I afford to support it if *The Blade* is opposed to it,’ and what *The Blade* might do.”

In the end, the former UT president suggested it was the personal outreach combined with the consultant's report that may have ensured non-interference with the process by *The Blade*:

As I understand it, [the MUO president] had a chance to present the [Ryan Beck & Co] study [to the publisher of *The Blade*]. . . . [The MUO president] was still new. And so how much rapport there was I don't know. But I don't think it was certainly antagonistic, because [the MUO president] had reached out to [the publisher] on this. But I think in the end, here was a respected consulting firm making a strong case that any reasonable person would have had difficulty refuting. I think it was a combination of the respect that [the publisher] had for [the MUO president] and the facts as portrayed by the Ryan Beck study that made that happen.

A former UT trustee suggested that the non-interference by *The Blade* may have been because the publisher of the newspaper was able to make an impact on the future of the institution and protect his family's legacy and interests by ensuring the MUO president be named president of the combined institution. This trustee believed that the publisher of *The Blade* knew that the former UT president was willing to step down and that the publisher wanted the MUO president to be the successor for the merged university.

Finally, an additional concern that some administrators and trustees spoke of was the lack of funding from the state to support the so-called frictional costs of the merger. These were estimated in the Ryan Beck & Co. report to be in the range of \$10-15 million and covered expenses such as administrative contract buyouts, updates to signage, and marketing. The participants that spoke of this concern speculated that perhaps due to financial strain on the part of the state as well as the reluctance by key merger proponents to tie financial obligations to the merger legislation to ensure passage, the frictional costs were never covered by the state.

Key merger players, particularly during the initial stages, were critical to the successful implementation of the UT-MUO merger. Participants including the two presidents of the institutions spoke of a very small group of individuals involved in the earliest discussions, with speed utilized to generate and maintain momentum and not allow potential dissension to foment. Some participants, such as faculty, lamented the speed of the process as not allowing enough time for study and evaluation of merger benefits and potential problems. By the time the merger became public knowledge, core

issues such as the determination to merge, the name of the combined institution, and the presidency of the combined institution had been resolved.

Post-merger Reaction

Virtually all of the participants suggested that they saw strong positive outcomes from the merger and that they did not question the decision to merge in retrospect. A small number of faculty members voiced concerns with a perceived “takeover” of administration by former MUO leaders. The same faculty members lamented the current president’s leadership style as too autocratic and less participatory than the previous UT president. One faculty member suggested that this leadership style resulted in the loss of senior faculty members who did not wish to continue to work in this allegedly autocratic environment. One Main Campus staff member and former chair of the Professional Staff Council described the differences in decision-making with the new president:

Well, decision-making was definitely different, I know [the president] personally doesn’t like committees very much . . . there was a whole shift in his thinking on how the university functions, because it is a much larger institution and faculty obviously were very involved [on Main Campus] in shared governance. So it took a different point of view of his to make this work—not to mention the student issues—you are talking less than 3,000 students there [on the Health Science Campus], as opposed to 20-some thousand here. So athletics was a whole new ball game to him, pardon the pun, but he has never seen anything like the athletics program; most of the student affairs program he has never seen. So it is a huge shift for him.

A faculty member on Main Campus suggested that, “On our campus, there is definitely a feeling that faculty participation in governance has been eroded.”

Some participants, particularly administrators, reflected a general sense of optimism as to the “completeness” and depth of the merger. While most participants would agree that cultures had not completely blended, and perhaps never will, there were not many individuals questioning the decision to merge. No participants suggested that a

“divorce” of the institutions should be considered. An administrator on the Health Science Campus spoke of the different cultures on the two campuses as the final pieces to merge:

It is pretty easy to merge the budgets and to connect the information technology systems and to align policies and procedures. Bringing the culture together is different. It is bringing the culture of a medical university and a large undergraduate and graduate university together, because the cultures are different. They are driven by different kinds of stakeholders who live in different worlds and not to derogate one or the other, to the contrary, they are both wonderful worlds.

The potential benefits of the merger touted early in the process by key leadership continued to be lauded post-merger. Participants remarked that the new size, breadth, and perception of the university has been recognized in the community and throughout the state. The former UT president noted that “the merger has achieved much of what we thought it would” and spoke about some of the positive outcomes for the university, including improved public perception and political clout:

I think that it has already started paying dividends in terms of the strength of the university as a leader. It has, perhaps, the largest budget of any [peer] institution. It’s clearly put us out in front of many of the other universities in the state in terms of recognition and influence in state policy. It makes us more attractive to outstanding faculty members and to students. It has made, with its combined budget now, a major force not only in the economy, but in economic development.

From a personal perspective, for some, living the set of merger experiences represented the height of a professional career. The former UT president spoke of a sense of personal pride and legacy left behind with the merger:

It’s the one thing in my career that I will always look back on and feel good about. I’m always proud of the way in which the two campuses came together in the face of some threatening views and agreed to do something that I think took a lot of courage. I don’t think that the University of Toledo will ever be the same. I think it will always be a much better, a much stronger, a much more influential institution as a result of this.

Participants from UT generally spoke with a sense of optimism and completeness following the UT-MUO merger. Some, particularly faculty, lamented the perceived autocratic style of the current administration and were dismayed with what they believed was an erosion of shared governance that had taken place during this administration. The decision to merge was generally not questioned, and participants, including administrators, spoke of an enhanced reputation of the combined institution.

Outliers

There were two issues of outliers of note in the data collected about UT-MUO merger. These were issues posited by one or a very limited number of participants, but not confirmed, even upon specific questioning, by other participants or documents. The fact that these issues could not be confirmed prevented them from being explored in greater detail. One issue was the degree of involvement by the former UT trustee and member of the board of regents who was involved in the early stages of the merger. This individual was self-described as a critical player in the process, one who acted as a go-between for the two presidents from the initial conversations and a key link to Columbus individuals such as other members of the board of regents and the legislature. While it was not questioned that this regent was an ardent supporter of the merger and was helpful in the process, approximately one-fourth of the participants, including the former UT president, questioned the degree to which this individual's participation affected the merger. For instance, the former UT president suggested that the two presidents began merger discussions on their own, not after being connected with this former trustee and regent. This outlier illustrated a lack of clarity with regard to the participants in the earliest stages of merger discussions.

The other outlier entailed what one former UT trustee described as merger conversations seven years prior to the merger. These merger conversations were an attempt, the trustee suggested, for what trustees were seeking to be a “game-changer” for the two institutions, leapfrogging what the trustee described as incremental growth. Participants commented about several other public and private conversations regarding merger opportunities, as well as attempts to merge in the past. However, this trustee suggested that the conversations he was referencing essentially led to the discussion that ultimately ended with the approval of the merger. Upon questioning, no other former UT administrators and trustees were able to confirm any awareness whatsoever of these early merger discussions.

Case Site Analysis: University of Colorado Denver

Chronologically, data collection at the UCD was the second of the two institutions in the study. Eight interviews were conducted in-person during a trip to Denver in the fall of 2010, two more were conducted subsequently in-person in Ohio with former administrators who relocated and 10 were conducted over the phone during the late fall and winter. The majority of the documents for analysis were obtained prior to any of the interviews.

Institutional Background and Development

The University of Colorado Denver is part of the University of Colorado (CU) system. The system is public and governed by a publicly-elected board of regents. The board of regents is one of few that is elected in the United States. Campuses in the system include the flagship campus in Boulder; the Downtown Campus, now merged with the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, formerly the University of Colorado

Health Sciences Center (UCHSC); and the Colorado Springs Campus. The Boulder campus traditionally has been known for prominent undergraduate and graduate programs, research, and NCAA Division I athletics. The Downtown Campus has been known largely as a commuter institution focusing on undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs, with a growing research enterprise. The Anschutz Medical Campus is a clinical and research health science campus, with modern, high-tech facilities. The Colorado Springs Campus is a growing regional campus serving a distinct undergraduate and graduate population. Prior to the consolidation between the Downtown and Health Sciences Center Campuses, the Health Sciences Center Campus relocated to its current campus in Aurora on the site of the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center.

Governance Structure

As evidenced in the interviews, the University of Colorado Denver prided itself on an extensive shared governance structure that was deep-rooted and, as described by a majority of study participants, showed only slight signs of erosion today. Campus faculty assemblies and a system-wide faculty council have historically enjoyed significant participation. The former system president, campus chancellors, other administrators, and faculty involved in the study consistently expressed broad commitment to a thorough shared governance system. One of the UCD administrators explained that, “faculty, staff, and students are involved in most of the big decisions . . . where there’s a university-wide decision, not unitary decisions, budgetary decisions [or] when it comes to unit cuts.” The administrator indicated that given the history of shared governance at UCD and the CU system overall,

To not continue that path with such a large decision for the University of Colorado in general, would not have been the right thing to do. It was an important piece that everyone paid very close attention to. If you look at the University of Colorado's history, there have been a lot of decisions that it had been involved [in], everyone from faculty, staff and students and external constituents . . . big decisions really go through governing structure process here . . . the mistakes that have been made at the University of Colorado . . . were when faculty, students and staff were not part of the decision-making process.

Many participants spoke of a shared governance structure on the Health Sciences Center Campus that was less engaged than the structure on the Downtown Campus. However, several participants suggested the difference in engagement to be typical for health science campuses due to the research and clinical roles of faculty as well as their method of compensation. The salary structure for Health Science Center Campus faculty was such that a very limited portion of each salary line came from state support. The rest had to be obtained by the individual faculty member through research grants and clinical activity. Noting that the medical campus ran "much more like a business," a CU system-wide administrator commented:

It's much less of the traditional academic culture. You have all the same elements; there is a faculty senate, those kinds of things, but it's much more of a top-down environment. It's a bottom-line, business-driven, clinical revenues, research revenues; faculty live in "an eat what you kill" world.

Factors Leading to Consolidation

According to a broad cross-section of participants, the UCD-UCHSC consolidation was driven by two primary factors, a desire for enhanced collaboration, synergies, and prestige as well as significant financial and political pressure from the state. Publicly, consolidation proponents including administrators spoke nearly exclusively of the desire for enhanced prestige, though others privately acknowledged the significant financial constraints the institution faced from the state. Critical to linking

these drivers was the experiences of the CU president with a merger at another institution where she previously worked. Additional factors that influenced the early stages of the consolidation included a chancellor succession plan and system-wide issues, specifically significant distractions on the Boulder Campus. These combined elements led to the initiation and commencement of consolidation discussions.

Political context and financial issues. The consolidation of UCD and UCHSC was driven in significant part by political and financial factors. Higher education in the state had been under fiscal constraints for some time due to significant reductions in state support related to the adoption of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) in Colorado in 1992. When Amendment 23 to the Colorado Constitution passed in 2000, it required increases in support for K-12 education at the expense of other state-funded entities (Colorado Department of the Treasury, 2010). While financial constraints were certainly a factor in consolidation discussions, it was not highlighted publicly by proponents as one of the main reasons for consolidation. However, calling the downplaying of financial issues as a major reason for consolidation “balderdash,” the participant who was the UCD chancellor prior to consolidation discussions suggested:

Finances were clearly one of the major drivers. We were [going to be] stronger together? I don't know. We might not have been as strong. But I think that one of the main reasons [for consolidation] was finance and I don't think you can deny that. We wanted to have a medical school to get more money because they brought in a tremendous number of grants, would have brought in tremendous amount of extra money for us. So it kind of all came down to finances.

Opportunities for collaboration, synergies and prestige. Participants were consistent in describing the main reasons for consolidation, as espoused by consolidation supporters such as administrators and the consultant retained by the university, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), including opportunities for enhanced collaboration,

synergies, an enhanced research portfolio, and increased prestige. Several study participants noted that the CU president desired a second Association of American Universities (AAU) institution (in addition to the Boulder Campus) as part of the system. The CU system president reinforced this notion of potential for enhanced prestige, commenting:

I thought it was a way to enhance the reputation of both parts of the campus because the Health Sciences Center by itself was never going to have the status of an AAU-type institution, and the Denver campus was never going to be able to do it by itself either. That was one of the reasons I said I thought it was a good idea. I still think that's true if the AAU were to expand. I think that the University of Colorado at Denver is very strong on . . . key AAU indicators.

Knowledge of other mergers. Approximately half of UCD participants suggested a main driver toward consolidation was the experience the CU president had while serving as provost at another merged institution. Campuses of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) consolidated in 1982, joining the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle with the University of Illinois at the Medical Center under the leadership of system President Stanley Ikenberry. The CU president remarked about the consolidation in Chicago:

When I first started as president, there were conversations among faculty about the fact that when the University of Illinois in Chicago had formed—at that point was 18 years before—members of the faculty, I believe on the Denver campus, had actually gone to visit UIC to talk with people about the merger process. I'm not sure whether anybody from health sciences went. There had been sort of interest at various times among the faculty at considering the merger process.

In addition to knowledge of the consolidation in Chicago, many participants referenced an awareness of a merger at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), which consolidated with the Medical College of Alabama in 1972. Representatives from UAB

participated in a “virtual site visit” with a UCD committee established to study the proposed consolidation to testify on their experiences in a consolidated institution.

Chancellor succession. Another factor leading to the consolidation in Colorado cited by several participants was the announcement of the two campus chancellors of their intentions to retire around the same time. A critical element of institutional mergers was the leadership succession plan. As noted by Martin and Samels (1994), without a solution agreeable to all parties, this issue could impede the process. The Downtown Campus chancellor announced her retirement shortly preceding consolidation discussions, and the Health Sciences Center Campus chancellor was appointed on an interim basis to serve as chancellor for both institutions. He later was appointed as the permanent chancellor of the combined institution but made it clear that he did not want to serve long in that role as he was at the latter part of his career. The CU president described how this led to initial consolidation discussions, saying, “Several faculty [members] approached me, including the dean of business. . . . She approached me and said, ‘Okay, before we start a search for a new chancellor, we should think about a consolidation.’”

System-wide issues. A majority of participants spoke of the multiple open forums that were held during the consolidation deliberations to solicit input from constituents system-wide. Anyone who wanted to speak on the matter had an opportunity to “testify.” Some testimony included concerns from Boulder Campus representatives related to apprehension of a shift in system-wide focus and resources toward the Downtown Campus as part of the consolidation. Some participants, however, suggested that the concerns of Boulder Campus representatives were effectively discounted as that

campus dealt with significant internal problems. The consolidation was not an issue that Boulder Campus representatives could press during a time of internal strife. The chancellor of the Boulder Campus reflected the concerns of some on that campus in testimony during one of the consolidation study open forums:

There is great concern on our campus if there is a merger on these two campuses. The question that will come up is what happens to the existing synergies between Boulder and Denver and between Boulder and Health Sciences Center? Will those now be put on the back burner because the merger is designed to have these two institutions work together? And then Colorado Springs and Boulder are on their own doing their own thing? I don't think that's part of the vision because of the university without walls, but there is that concern. I think you'll hear from a couple of the deans that will talk about some of the very strong programs that are already in existence asking this sort of the question: If you merge the Denver campus and the Health Sciences Center, what happens to these synergies? (University of Colorado, 2003, p. 137)

This concern was compounded post-consolidation when, in 2005, the offices of the board of regents and the president relocated from the Boulder Campus to Denver. This move perpetuated a view of a shift in power in the system from Boulder to Denver. A few participants, including administrators and faculty members, commented that the concerns expressed by Boulder Campus representatives needed to be tempered, perhaps due to major institutional issues with which that campus was dealing. Two issues made national news at the time, one focused on questions related to academic freedom with a faculty member, and the other surrounding accusations of sexual improprieties in the football program. Several participants suggested that, because the Boulder Campus was dealing with these issues at the time, Boulder Campus constituents could not become too embroiled in the circumstances surrounding the consolidation. One UCD faculty member commented on these distractions:

Because they [Boulder Campus constituents] were so involved in, mired in their own mess, that they didn't have the energy or whatever to really get out front and

fight consolidation. And oh yes, you got to believe that Boulder is still, you know, I would say most of the staff people don't give a damn. But some faculty and some administrators do—they are] still disturbed that right now the University of Colorado Denver [is] as big resource-wise as Boulder.

Extreme financial and political circumstances existed in Colorado related to higher education in the years preceding the UCD-UCHSC consolidation. While some administrators admitted the financial and political pressures to be drivers for the consolidation, the main reasons espoused by key players were academic and research synergies. An opportunity related to chancellor succession also existed at the time of the consolidation with the retirement of one campus chancellor, eliminating a potential sticking point for the consolidation to take place.

Decision-making Processes

The decision-making processes during the UCD consolidation were generally hailed by interviewees as highly participatory, although there was some disagreement among faculty members questioning the genuine nature of opportunities for involvement. Virtually all participants agreed that there were opportunities to be heard and to participate in the process. However, while recognizing opportunities for involvement, a few faculty members questioned if their participation really mattered and if the outcome of the consolidation was predetermined. The following section serves as a description of the decision-making processes including summaries of the various constituent groups and their roles in the consolidation, the timeline, and outreach and education efforts.

Participants. A diverse set of participants were involved in the discussions regarding the UCD consolidation. Members of the administration were nearly exclusively involved from the initial discussions, while the discussions branched out thereafter to deans, faculty, staff, students, and community members. This broad

participation was widely recognized as reflective of the values and traditions of the University of Colorado system, one that embraced shared governance processes in most major organizational decisions.

Administration. The majority of the participants in the study were administrators, based upon a priori assumptions from the literature and initial referrals from other participants. Martin and Samels (1994) suggested a key group of individuals to be involved in the early onset of merger discussions be comprised heavily of representatives from university administration. According to virtually all the participants, except the president herself, the assumption on campus was that the process was driven by the president based upon her prior experience at the University of Illinois Chicago. At the president's initiation, select executive administrators were brought into the consolidation discussions early on in a confidential process. The process became more open when the president asked two deans to chair a desirability study, and members were selected for this public committee. One UCD administrator described the early process:

We needed to do, number one, a desirability study. Number one, is both of the chancellors had to be on board including the president[']s team and we wanted to have a conversation because it was opening up a Pandora's box at that point. Number two is we needed to get the right people in a room that had leadership from both campuses and system-wide in a desirability study. Is there even a desire to go further on this conversation and how do we make sure that we have testimony from a variety of people who have an idea from this perspective in the world on what this would mean for the system, the two campuses and quite honestly the state.

After the two deans were appointed to chair the desirability study committee, individuals representing different campus groups were selected by their respective organizations to serve on the committee. Going forward, the administration made it clear that broad participation was desired in the process. The chancellor commented on the

risk/reward proposition of opening the process and the need to maintain consistency with organizational values:

Well clearly, if you're in an administrator leadership position you use your influence in an appropriate way to affect the outcome; but you have to be prepared to lose. . . . In traditional university values, the process and the opportunity for shared governance in an open exchange of ideas is the dominant value. Product is not the dominant value. It's great if you win football games, it's great if you win Nobel prizes, it's great if you have a great research portfolio but there are great universities that don't have those things.

Board of regents. Involvement of members of the board of regents was very limited during the consolidation deliberations. The regents gave initial approval to the administration to pursue study of the consolidation and later provided final approval. However, there was not much involvement other than that. Participants including administrators suggested that this limited involvement by the board was standard at the institution and that the majority of those involved in major institutional deliberations were faculty and staff and other constituent groups. However, the CU president noted that the regents supported the consolidation from day one. She stated, "There were some members of the board who thought I was moving way too slowly." While the remainder of participants generally had a perception of limited regent involvement, the president and regent participants in the study made it clear that private discussions took place between the president and select regents.

Study committees. As previously mentioned, the study committees—initially the desirability committee and later the feasibility committee—were comprised of members representing broad cross-sections of campus constituents. One UCD administrator described the selection process as one that represented various constituent groups, but with final member selection by executive leadership:

There [were] campus-wide nominations that were sent to the chancellors and president. . . . The bottom up, different groups nominated folks. Actually I think the president made the final selections with the two chancellors on who should sit on that one [desirability committee]. And we really did want representation at every level and we wanted the external community numbers to be part of it.

Some faculty participants presented a different perception of the genesis of the committees and their purposes. One Health Sciences Center Campus faculty member believed that the decision to consolidate the institutions was administrative. It was predetermined and the committees were established only for formality and to “cover the idea that there’s joint governance.”

It was a sham if the committees were told something that had already been decided by the president. . . . Somebody else has decided that it’s desirable. And somebody else has decided it’s feasible. And . . . my first opinion, I don’t know it’s a fact, was that the president of the university had already made her point and pitched the regents that this was both desirable and feasible before the faculty was ever asked to chime in on it.

Another faculty member had similar thoughts related to the genuine nature of the committees and their purposes, suggesting that other faculty felt that they were not really asked their opinion. This faculty member said that faculty were just asked to participate so that they felt like they were involved, but they did not really have input on or the ability to stop the process. A student government leader was more accepting than the aforementioned faculty members of the established functioning and purposes of the committees, disagreeing that the decision was already made. Believing that the idea of consolidation was truly “an idea put forth,” she thought it to be sound decision-making strategy:

It was an idea that was formulating and probably well-formulated when it was put forth eventually. And I think that’s okay. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that. I think it’s actually smart to know what you’re talking about before you suggest something so massive like merger.

Consultant. A consultant was utilized by the CU system to analyze the desirability and feasibility of the consolidation. PricewaterhouseCoopers issued an independent report to the university following an August 2003 vote of the board of regents authorizing the study. PricewaterhouseCoopers summarized comments from the various stakeholder groups, conducted benchmarking and site visits with peer institutions, examined desirability and feasibility themes, and explored opportunities that could result from the consolidation. It also listed issues and concerns that the university community was encouraged to address. The consultant's report enthusiastically endorsed the concept of the consolidation, summarizing thoughts accordingly:

Specifically, the Consolidation Study Committee (also referenced as the Desirability Study Committee) concluded that the University of Colorado (CU) has an unprecedented opportunity to create a great twenty-first century urban research university. The Study Committee reported that consolidation of the University of Colorado's Denver, Health Sciences, and Fitzsimons campuses enhance teaching and research programs in the combined entity, increase synergy across disciplines, stimulate access to important new sources of funding, have positive economic impacts on the Colorado economy, and attract faculty, staff, and students of the highest quality. The Committee further concluded that this new university had the potential to strengthen the entire University of Colorado System. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, n.d., p. 4)

Several interview participants referenced the PwC study but generally in passing. Most were content with the notion that an independent firm had conducted an analysis and made a recommendation but did not otherwise go into detail about elements from the report taken into consideration. An exception would be the "Issues and Concerns" section of the report from which several elements were incorporated into the core principles that guided the consolidation. For example, a financial "firewall" was suggested by a number of faculty who had fears related to losing funds for their programs. The PwC report detailed this concern as follows:

There is concern that in times of financial stress, School of Medicine clinical funds might go to support UCD or UCD academic funds might go to support the School of Medicine, or that teaching-oriented funding at UCD could be diverted to the missions of the Health Sciences Center. While all constituents expressed some concern over funds moving in either direction, some scenarios raised greater concern among certain set of constituents. In particular, clinical faculty expressed great fear that funds from University Physicians Incorporated (UPI) could be siphoned off to support UCD. (PricewaterhouseCoopers, n.d., p. 33)

Constituent groups. The various campus constituent groups within the university were engaged throughout the process, mainly through the desirability and feasibility studies and the open forums held by these committees. The faculty assembly was widely-recognized by interview participants as the most involved in the process, mainly from the Downtown Campus. The Health Sciences Center Campus faculty assembly had very limited participation and was mainly represented by the assembly leadership working in concert with the counterpart for the Downtown Campus. A significant element of this involvement was a faculty survey conducted by the two faculty assemblies to assess faculty opinion regarding the prospects of consolidation. The participants who discussed staff and student governance organization involvement indicated it to be very limited in nature, restricted to a select few representatives serving on various consolidation committees. The student government president spoke of a personal relationship she maintained with the CU president and indicated that she was consulted regularly by the president to ascertain student perspectives on the potential consolidation.

Community. Like the on-campus constituent groups, participation by off-campus community members was limited to representation to the study committees. Generally, the community members were very supportive of the opportunity they saw in the

consolidation, but some from business saw additional financial opportunities that could have been realized. One community member described his involvement accordingly:

We had regular scheduled sessions. When our group was brought together we looked at different aspects of [the consolidation] at the time...my [personal] agenda had more in it, "Where are the savings coming out of this?" And that was something that was not quantified terribly well. We met regularly with the committee and there were different perspectives. . . . I remember talking about [the process] and what are the risks of it if you move too fast, what are the risks if you move too slow. . . . I just do recall my interest is where the economic savings of this direction.

Timeline. The timeline of the consolidation was relatively extended, covering the full year of analysis and discussion that was recommended by Martin and Samels (1994). Consolidation discussions were spurred by the CU president's "Vision 2010," which challenged all campuses in the university system to grow a culture of excellence, build a university without walls, increase diversity, increase resources and use them wisely, and integrate infrastructure.

The idea for the consolidation began to be addressed in 2002, and in June 2003, the Desirability Committee released its report suggesting the potential benefits of the consolidation and limited hindrances. The board of regents authorized the independent consultant's study in August 2003 that was conducted by PwC. Simultaneously, the Feasibility Committee met to assess implementation of the consolidation and released its report in April 2004. The PwC report was released in June 2004. In possession of the reports from the Feasibility Committee and the consultant's report, the regents voted unanimously for consolidation on June 30, 2004. James H. Shore, M.D., who was the chancellor of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center since 1998 and the interim chancellor of the University of Colorado at Denver during the 2003-04 academic year, was named the single chancellor of the consolidated entity on the same date the

consolidation became effective, July 1, 2004. Several interview participants remarked that an additional year was desired by the administration for preparation of implementation of the consolidation before the effective date, but the regents felt that the institutions were ready and made the implementation, in effect, immediate.

The strong belief in shared governance processes in the CU system led to the extensive study and deliberation of the consolidation. Participants who were members of the administration suggested that this was the process because the system would not have handled major decisions any other way. Some faculty participants, however, felt that the extensive processes were just a show to appease constituents along the way to approval. Taglines were used often, in part, to allay fears of constituents. One of the lines eschewed by the chancellor frequently was to describe the process as “an evolution, not a revolution.” With this, he sought to indicate that the consolidation was not happening overnight, would be done carefully and thoughtfully, and would not eliminate jobs or make peoples’ jobs radically different. A faculty member described the tagline as a calming mechanism:

The mantra that was spoken, this was evolution, not revolution. Everything was done in the back, in the foreground to mollify, to keep people from being frightened about change. I mean everything was done I think that was possible in terms of the administration to try to keep faculty and staff informed, engaged, so that people wouldn’t worry about—one of the guarantees that was made right up front. Nobody will lose their jobs.

One UCD administrator described the execution of “evolution, not revolution” as handling behind-the-scenes administrative elements first and quickly. Describing the administrative consolidation as “fast and furious,” the administrator noted that the academic areas and others that impacted constituents were slower. “And I think that was

appropriate because it was pretty impactful to people's day-to-day lives. I think they were good decisions.”

Outreach and education. The consolidation at UCD included lengthy, extensive processes aimed at involving constituents in the process. Open forums were held, surveys were conducted, and it was commonly accepted that anyone who wanted to have his or her say on the matter could do so. While an issue such as consolidation may not directly impact or interest the typical student, faculty, or staff member, there was no shortage of information or opportunities for involvement for those who desired it, including serving on committees and participating in open forums and faculty surveys.

Initial key player involvement. The consolidation discussions among the Denver institutions were generally considered thorough, in-depth and participatory, but the initial stages began with a limited number of individuals. Key participants, including the university president and campus chancellors, indicated that they worked together on major issues. In particular, there was close collaboration between the president and the chancellor, who began as a permanent appointment on the Health Sciences Center Campus and later a simultaneous interim appointment on the Downtown Campus. Other key individuals included members of the administration prior to additional players being brought into consolidation discussions. After the initial discussions, the consolidation Desirability Committee was formed. It was at that point participants indicated that the consolidation came into the “public sphere” with broad awareness in the campus communities.

Open forums. As the consolidation study committees conducted their task of evaluating the possible combination, a series of open forums were held for constituents to

give public testimony as to their thoughts and feelings about the prospect. Interview participants spoke of free and open opportunities by anyone who wanted to speak on the matter. Those who testified covered issues including current collaborations between the institutions, additional potential benefits and synergies, potential concerns, and more. Of regular discussion was the notion of any potential “showstoppers,” major issues that could have stopped the process at any point. Discussion covered several showstoppers, but in the end, participants agreed that there were none, and other concerns, such as financial firewalls, were addressed in the consolidation planning.

One element addressed by some interview participants regarding the open forums was that those sessions were carefully crafted. The participants pointed out that some individuals who were specifically asked to testify were those who the committee or the administration knew had a positive view of the consolidation. They believed it may have been a way of “spinning” the conversation in a manner that benefited consolidation supporters. However, in describing this selection process, one Health Sciences Center Campus administrator pointed out the difference between careful selection and manipulation:

Participants [were] carefully selected; the chancellor looked at every list. . . . Finding people who wouldn't be destructive that had their own agendas . . . It wasn't lined up to say this is a group that will vote for it, but it was lined up to say these are the people that tend to be constructive players and objective and that kind of thing. Although I must say if you go back to the [selection of the desirability committee co-chairs] . . . the co-chairs were selected because they were clearly [supportive]. By the way, [the co-chairs were] probably the only deans on each of the campuses who were [supportive], so that wasn't an accident either.

The administrator remarked on the privilege of the chancellor to decide on consolidation players, while defending the process as one that was transparent and not restrained or controlled:

Some of this, it wasn't naively done, it was done with a lot of thought, but it was not manipulated either. It's the right of the chancellor to pick whoever he wants to lead his activities, but it was not manipulated, data was not hidden, things were not skewed; whatever happened, happened.

Even the CU president acknowledged the careful selection of critical consolidation players in that those who were supportive of the consolidation were chosen for involvement in the process, while also remarking that a wider range of perspectives was desired for input, as selected by the desirability co-chairs:

I consulted with [the desirability co-chairs] who would be good people from each of their campuses to be part of the process. Then I think I named a couple of people from Boulder and Colorado Springs and someone from the central administration. But I really looked to [the co-chairs] to help me populate the committee, so in some sense they were going to choose people that they thought were supportive [of consolidation]. [Pause] But I pushed them, I said it's important to have people you know don't support it because if it's just people who support, it's not going to work.

Perhaps this careful selection of consolidation study participants was picked up on by constituents. One community member commented on the clarity of the administrators' plan noting that "it wasn't as wasn't as much of a matter of asking as it was this is where they were headed and can you guys help us with the pace and how we go about doing this or the observation of it." It seemed to a faculty member from the Health Sciences Center Campus that the only way the plan would change was if "quote/unquote, a showstopper was identified." Another faculty member from the Downtown Campus seemed to share initial questions about the preconceived end result of the process and uncertainty before it began:

Well, after we were all pulled together and we had a meeting, [the president] came and met with us and basically told us what she wanted us to do. And she was adamant that, you know . . . [laughing] I've never been sure about this statement. But she was adamant . . . that a decision had not been made, and that the committee's function was to study the feasibility of it. And whether or not joining the two campuses, joining the two operations would be a benefit to the CU system, and a benefit to, whatever the joint campuses or consolidated campuses would become. And the reason I say I've never been sure of that is, you know, she was the president, . . . and I mean she was . . . in good standing at the time. A fairly powerful individual. And so even if we came back with a, well we don't know, you know, if we came back with a unanimous no, this should not, this will not work, then she may have said okay, we'll drop it here. But, I always kind of had the sense that it wasn't an administrative decision . . . and [the chancellor] would reiterate that, you know, that [it was] not a done deal. Where we'll just [look] to see if it's feasible and so on.

In response to a question about the open forums serving the purpose of an illusion of meaningful participation, one faculty member remarked that his impression was that commenting at an open forum would not make a difference. He believed that his impressions were shared by many people, noting that:

These were open forums for the entire faculty; . . . out of the 2,000 or 3,000 faculty we would get 100 people there to come and talk. And I think people avoided it mostly just because they felt that it was a done deal.

Faculty survey. Part of the evaluation process during the consolidation study was a faculty survey on the Downtown Denver and Health Sciences Center Campuses conducted by the respective faculty assemblies at the request of the desirability study committee. The survey was sent to faculty on both campuses and inquired as to their favorability toward consolidation. The general response of the faculty was one of indifference, especially among Health Sciences Center faculty. One former faculty assembly chair described the response as one of general endorsement, along with indifference toward the consolidation, as follows:

It was extremely important that that survey came out the way it did. But the simple fact that the survey was so overwhelmingly underwhelmed by the whole

idea, that is, oh I don't know where it was 60%, 70% of the faculty who just didn't care, on both campuses. They were indifferent. Because . . . you know, most faculty, they have their labs, they have their classes, they have their clinics, they have their research, what do they care. I mean when you look at it realistically, most faculty in most institutions really don't care about faculty governance. They're not really inclined to get involved, unless threatened! And given the fact that so many faculty were just frankly indifferent was a real game changer. And basically said you know the faculty blatantly are for it. Because there was enough people, oh I think there was probably something like 55% or 60% of the faculty on the [Downtown] Denver campus were favorable, and maybe 40% of the faculty on the Anschutz campus were favorable. And maybe there was 10% of the faculty on both campuses who were adamantly opposed to it. And the rest of them in the middle. So that meant 50% of the faculty [with an opinion] and maybe 50% of the faculty in Anschutz didn't care. When you've got that large of a favorable and indifferent population, you can't make the case that this is bad.

Concerns. Many concerns were expressed by constituents during the open forums and other outlets, not the least of which were the previously discussed financial firewalls. At a more fundamental level, some asked the simple question of why the same synergies and benefits could not be realized without consolidation. One Health Sciences Center faculty member said, "I was personally not in favor of the consolidation. I thought it was a huge waste of time and effort. And that it accomplished nothing." This same faculty member spoke of his perception of the drivers toward consolidation, and questioned new synergies espoused by consolidation supporters:

My opinion was that the faculty downtown felt inferior to Boulder, and that they could hook their wagon to the star, the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center was and is very successful and its own national reputation, and among state medical schools will say, you know, ranks in the top 20 regardless of how you look at it. Grants, prestige, whatever. There were scattered faculty members on the Health Sciences Center Campus who felt that there could be some advantages of this that had to do with collaborative research. But the reality was there's never been any barriers to collaborative research anyway. The other kind of issue that came up is the pipeline for undergraduate students to have a better chance of getting into the health profession. Again, there was never anybody who said that you can't apply to the school of nursing, or school of pharmacy, or school of medicine or dentistry, or whatever. . . . So there's a lot of, you know, fluff in the reasons why consolidation might be good.

Questions also arose during the open forums regarding the timing of the consolidation, physical distance between the campuses, and the potential organizational structure.

The decision-making processes utilized in the UCD-UCHSC consolidation were, at least on the surface, highly participatory and inclusive. While processes were initiated by members of the administration, consolidation deliberations quickly entered the public sphere through desirability and feasibility studies, a consultant's report, open forums, and a faculty survey. Constituents had ample opportunities to make their voices heard on the consolidation, though some faculty participants questioned the genuine nature of these opportunities, suggesting that they were just "for show" and that the decision to consolidate had been predetermined.

Post-merger Reaction

Many interview participants shared their perspectives of the current situation today relative to the consolidation. The perceptions were quite mixed among constituency groups, with some participants, particularly administrators, saying that the consolidation has made the university stronger, some saying that it has made a negligible difference, and others, including faculty and some administrators, pointing to mixed messages and a lack of completion in the process. In response to a question about consolidation outcome, participants that were consolidation proponents highlighted increased synergies and combined business functions and enhanced ability to compete for external research funding. Those that initially questioned the consolidation now posed questions asking what the institution is able to do today that it was not able to do before. Many participants questioned branding initiatives that continued to send conflicting messages to the community. While the Health Sciences Center Campus became one with

the Downtown Campus, the two are frequently listed as separate institutions on CU system publications that list the campuses, including Boulder and Colorado Springs.

Virtually all participants who spoke on branding issues admitted problems with how the single entity was recognized today. One Health Sciences Center Campus administrator commented on the lack of clarity of institutional branding, including the different ways that academic institutions and academic medical centers were typically branded, as well as local political issues:

Yeah. I think the branding has been a huge struggle. For this campus, a lot of its identity and the value of a brand is not so much in the academic programs as much as the patient care; that people look there and they go, “That’s the place I want to go because they have leading-edge research that’s going to help me and personal healthcare. That’s the place to go.” So that’s here, you’re branding for the public and for a patient population. Where downtown, you’re branding for student population, and here the students are going to come and no doubt that the brand does help, but this is highly competitive and there’s a thousand students for every slot in some of these programs. Where downtown, you’re competing for students, so it’s a whole different thing, it’s a campus, . . . so that has been tricky because you brand a medical [campus] different than you do an academic campus. We straddle the city of Aurora and Denver. Aurora has feelings about anything that says Denver in the title but yet University of Colorado at Aurora has no national cache. I mean it’s complicated.

Part of the concerns related to the thoroughness and completeness of the consolidation may be related to the “evolution, not revolution” process outlined by the UCD chancellor. While business services and back office functions were priorities early in the process and were merged relatively quickly, other issues, such as academic and student affairs and research, were left to evolve on their own, and some participants questioned if these areas ever were truly integrated or to the degree or rapidity that they should have been. Faculty and student governance groups were not encouraged, or took it upon themselves, to consider merging until recently. Some participants reflected that the semantics of the word “consolidation” as opposed to “merger” accurately reflected

the “evolution, not revolution” mentality and, along those lines, may have also led to a more reactive and less proactive approach to consolidation completion. One Health Sciences Center administrator described the perceived difference between the two words consolidation and merger:

Consolidation was a coming together. A merger has this takeover kind of thing. Mergers and acquisitions, right? It was really important, I mean the Downtown Campus saw this [the Health Sciences Center Campus] as a behemoth, and this campus saw the Downtown Campus as something they couldn't really relate to, you know, and so they were very interesting. Downtown has all these students and there's hardly any students here. This has all this research and there's comparatively smaller research there. So, consolidation was more of the bringing together and a merger is more of a takeover; is how people connoted them, so consolidation was chosen on purpose because there was nobody taking over on either side of the organization. It really was intended as the bringing together the best of both.

Another Downtown Campus administrator commented on the difference between the two words and mentioned that the selection of the word was debated. This administrator said that the chancellor espoused a view that the word consolidation entailed less anxiety for participants, and that administrators “were very clearly instructed and never used any other word but consolidation from the very, very beginning of the process.” Asked if the semantics of the word consolidation somehow also implied a less thorough and less rapid process than merger, the same administrator commented:

I've never thought of it that way. We never really discussed it that way. We always were advised that we're going to take as much time as we need. We're not in any rush. You know, especially anything related to academics. Anything related to academics, we were going to take our time, and there was no need to rush. Whereas, on the financial side, where faculty were not involved, we moved very, very quickly. So, anything involving the faculty, there was no need to stir them up because these were not matters of life and death or financial survival for the institution, and so taking our time and allowing faculty to get comfortable enabled us to do that. That [the slower motion on academic issues] was to reduce the anxiety and to let people know that the consolidation was a long-term and not a short-term proposition. We're going to take one step at a time was people were comfortable and let it happen, you know, naturally—as naturally as we could—

rather than forcing it prematurely. But anything on the administrative side, you know, we just moved those as fast as appropriate.

Perhaps due, in part, to the lack of completion of the consolidation, as well as fears that the current CU president wanted to “undo” the consolidation, several participants indicated concerns about the consolidation’s survival. Of note was that the majority of those who expressed significant concerns about this were former members of the administrative team who are now working at other institutions. They noted that the current CU president was not in favor of the consolidation from the beginning (prior to his appointment as president), and they were afraid that the significant achievement of the consolidation would be for naught. As previous chair of the board of trustees for the Metropolitan State College of Denver, the current president expressed his displeasure at the notion of consolidation. One Downtown Campus faculty member described his perception of the current president’s views on the consolidation in that the president was opposed to the consolidation from the beginning:

I think rumor has it that he [the current CU president] was pissed when it came through. Then when he became president he said, “well I’m going to undo it, because I didn’t like it in the first place. I thought it was a bad idea.”

However, the board of regents has recently voted and reaffirmed its support for the consolidated institution, so there does not appear to be immediate threats to the combined institution’s survival. In the end, this statement of support has led to general feelings of optimism, mainly by the individuals still at the institution, regarding future successes. One Downtown Campus faculty member commented on the positive outcomes of the consolidation, saying, “We’re actually beginning to bring in a lot more money than we did in the past. We’re bringing in better faculty . . . [and] students. So all of the stuff [the president] saw as future possibilities are starting to come through.”

Participants at UCD generally spoke of positive outcomes post-consolidation, though some expressed fear that others had a desire to undo the consolidation and “divorce” the institutions. While a vote by the board of regents reaffirmed the consolidation, several participants spoke of a lack of “completeness” of the consolidation, with strong differences in campus cultures continuing to exist on the two campuses. Marketing and branding remained an issue, with the Anschutz Medical Campus frequently branded as a separate entity within the University of Colorado system.

Outliers

Only one major outlier issue emerged from the data collected at the CU site, that being the individual who initiated and led the efforts for the consolidation. Virtually all participants suggested that the idea for the consolidation came from the CU president, based upon her experiences at the University of Illinois Chicago. Participants assumed that she had a vision for the Denver campuses coming together in a similar manner as those in Chicago and initiated the process accordingly. This suggestion conflicted with the view of the president herself who suggested that, while she had the experience from Chicago, it was the faculty who came to her to initiate the consolidation in Denver. She said that she was in favor of the idea but felt it needed to be fully explored and vetted through the usual process of shared governance at the institution. One former Health Sciences Center administrator described the issue of the president’s desires as follows:

I think it was very clear that [the president] wanted this to happen, so, in academia, as you probably know, can put a face on decisions that are made behind closed doors. I’m not saying that happened, I think [the president] is and was an honorable leader with great vision, and this was one of her visions.

Cross-Case Analysis

The cross-case analysis was developed in a similar manner as the individual case site analyses, with a search for commonalities among the codes most relevant to decision-making. However, as themes developed within each case site, they were subsequently examined across the two study sites as part of the cross-case analysis. Each theme was visible more at one institution than the other, and consistencies and inconsistencies in themes across the two study sites are examined here. For example, the theme of *avoidance of conflict* was prevalent at both institutions, rooted in codes including the process, outreach and education, participants, and concerns. Juxtaposing institution-specific issues with the theme of *avoidance of conflict* allowed similarities and differences to emerge between the two study sites. The most common themes between the two case analyses, in conjunction with the consideration of the research questions and the literature, formed the basis for the cross-case analysis.

Overview

On the surface, the mergers at UT and UCD were very similar. Both were public institutions incorporating a freestanding medical school and university hospital into a comprehensive university. Both were roughly similar in the size of budgets, workforces, and student enrollments. Both institutions felt financial and political pressure to change from their respective states, Ohio and Colorado. Financial issues aside, both suggested similar desires for synergies and prestige from the mergers. In the end, the timing of circumstances and the leadership at the institutions proved to be critical to the successful implementation of the mergers.

The decision-making processes, however, the focus of this study, varied significantly in the two mergers. While both institutions had strong histories of shared governance, the participatory processes revered by such a governance system were largely embraced during the UCD consolidation, but not in the UT merger. Administration participants at UCD suggested in the interviews that it was an open, transparent process that provided plenty of opportunity for broad participation. Critics in the UCD interviews questioned the genuine nature of involvement opportunities as essentially meaningless with the end result predetermined. At UT, traditional decision-making processes were set aside in favor of a more top-down approach. While there was some criticism from UT constituent groups, particularly as evidenced by faculty members interviewed in the study, it was not enough to derail the process.

Themes

This section discusses four major themes that emerged from the data. These themes were clearly visible throughout both mergers, as described by the participants in the study and the analyzed documents. The themes emerged through careful consideration of the coded data in conjunction with the literature on academic decision-making and mergers. The themes discussed here are *avoidance of conflict*, *need for validation*, *momentum*, and *disconnect among views*. All four themes related to the research questions of this study and provided an understanding of the decision-making processes utilized in the mergers.

Avoidance of conflict. Perhaps the most prevalent of the themes that emerged frequently and deeply across the institutions and one that was carefully managed by administration was the *avoidance of conflict* or *potential conflict*. The leaders and merger

proponents of these two institutions had a keen understanding of institutional dynamics and potential pitfalls in the process and strategically avoided potential conflict. This desire to avoid conflict served as motivation for several key decisions at each institution, potentially allowing for a path of least resistance to form in front of them as they sought to effect the mergers.

At UT, the merger did not become public knowledge until several key decisions had been made. The decision to merge had taken place behind closed doors as well as had decisions on core issues, such as the name and leadership of the combined institution. University of Toledo study participants, such as the former UT president spoke, frequently about the need for secrecy at the beginning to get the merger well on its way. Several participants at UT suggested a fear that, if the process had been open to broader participation from the beginning, the outcome could have been vastly different. Developing an exclusive process early on that included limited participation was an attempt to get the process started in a way desired by administration to ensure that it was not stopped early. A member of the Ohio board of regents spoke to the restrictive nature and rapidity of the process, and the utility of such in avoiding potential conflict:

We did it with the idea on a need to know basis. In other words, if you didn't need to know, we weren't going to tell you because we tried to confine it to as few people as possible. I believe that was one of the critical success factors of this deal, the way we handled the dissemination of the information. Because you know what happens in this town is if somebody doesn't like something, it picks up momentum so rapidly you can barely breathe to salvage anything left of a deal like that. There were people out there that didn't want this to happen, including people at MCO, including people at UT, but by the time they got into it, most of this stuff [the core issues of the merger] had been accomplished already and the momentum was there.

Of note was the difference in the early-onset stages with the UCD consolidation. It was in the public sphere from the early discussions, and participants, including administrators,

suggested that such an institutional decision would never be made without broad participation from constituents. As previously discussed, however, the early exposure of merger discussions and broad participation was criticized by some faculty participants that suggested the discussions were just for show and the merger decision predetermined.

Another choice made by administrators at UT that potentially avoided conflict was the fact that no feasibility study was conducted for the merger. The Ryan Beck & Co. report was equivalent to a desirability study. It stated that the merger was desirable, but further study needed to be conducted to adequately evaluate various elements of the proposed combination. This additional time of study and evaluation, as recommended by Martin and Samels (1994), was taken at UCD. Based upon comments from the former UT president and others regarding the need to expeditiously move the process along, the lack of a feasibility study at UT was a deliberate effort by administration not to allow the merger process to languish. The former UT president remarked on the expedited timeline and how the speed of the process avoided potential conflict:

So, we agreed to do it as fast as we could. To do only those things that were necessary in order to get it past the legislature and the governor, to make it quick, to make it decisive. (emphasis added) To not stop for anyone but keep that momentum going and to do it in the fastest time possible and to let everyone know that this thing is not going to be subject to highly-detailed studies and conversations. (emphasis added) That there will be presentations; there will be Q&A, but we're moving forward and you're either going to be on this bus or you're not going to be on it. I think early on, people felt like they wanted to be on the bus. At least I felt that way. And it reinforced my own sense of purpose in all this.

Efforts to appease anxious constituents in the UT merger, as discussed by the former UT president, addressed core issues, such as retaining the name the University of Toledo, likely a potential sticking point that could have otherwise ignited passionate discourse among alumni, students, faculty, staff, and others. Along these lines,

administration representatives carefully worked with representatives of the various unions at UT to make it clear that all existing contracts and relationships would continue to be maintained post-merger. Without those assurances as to the future of these organizations, significant problems may have resulted.

The so-called “frictional costs” of the UT merger were discussed by several participants, with some of them lamenting that the state never provided for the costs in the legislation that enabled the merger or otherwise. Participants including the former UT president indicated that merger proponents did not push for provisions of the frictional costs to be covered in the legislation, potentially for fear that it could raise opposition to the process in challenging economic times. In the end, the desired result of the merger taking place was more important than ensuring financial support from the state. This was alluded to in the quote above by the former UT president that institutional leaders focused on, “Only those things that were necessary to get it past the legislature and the governor.” A decision was made to avoid the potential conflict of a financial debate.

Significant attention was devoted earlier in this chapter to the relationship between UT, MUO, the leaders of the institutions, and *The Blade* at the time of the merger. The efforts made for outreach to *The Blade* and its publisher were significant attempts to avoid potential conflict. Key participants knew that if *The Blade* publicly opposed the merger, the process may have been much more difficult and potentially could have failed. A former chair of the UT board of trustees described this concern:

Until we knew that it was going to start to grow some legs, our biggest concern was how *The Blade* was going to react. We expected all kind of trouble from *The Blade* and as you know we got none. I think that some of that had to do with the

fact that they favored [the MUO president] as well and the fact that [the MUO president] was going to be the heir apparent. I think that backed them off as well.

By being proactive, members of the administration were able to ensure non-interference by *The Blade* in the process.

At UCD, an ongoing mantra throughout the consolidation was “evolution, not revolution.” With this statement, the chancellor attempted to reassure constituents that this process was not happening overnight, would happen with significant thought and discourse, and would evolve as necessary over time without harmful disruption to individuals or the organization. A psychiatrist by profession, the chancellor knew the human impact that organizational change of this magnitude could have on individuals and utilized this slogan throughout the process to set participants at ease and avoid potential conflict.

A sub-theme that was identified as part of the *avoidance of conflict* was the *perception of involvement*. Whether or not the processes in the two mergers were truly open, transparent, and participatory was a matter of personal perspective, but an obvious effort was made at the two institutions to ensure at least the perception of involvement by constituent groups. This effort was made to a much larger degree at UCD than at UT, but attempts were made by the administration at both institutions to engage key groups within the universities to address concerns of constituents and give a nod to shared governance principles.

At UCD, broad participatory processes were engaged during the study and evaluation phase of the consolidation. These processes entailed study committees with diverse membership, open forums for interested constituents to speak and have their voices heard, and a faculty survey across the two campuses assessing faculty perception

of the concept of the consolidation. These opportunities were available regardless of whether or not input gathered in these venues significantly changed the processes in any way. Representatives from UCD administration who participated in the study insisted these opportunities for involvement were important due to the nature of shared governance at the institution; critics among faculty members that participated in the study suggested that these opportunities were just a façade for administration to give the impression of shared governance. This criticism by faculty may be bolstered by administrator participants who admitted that participants in these open forums were carefully selected and that the format of the hearings was carefully orchestrated to put the best impression of the consolidation out for public view.

At UT, open forums took place but in a much different manner and in a far different way than at UCD. They took place much later in the process, after the decision to merge and other major merger decisions had taken place. They were mainly informational sessions and served more as a venue for constituents to ask questions of the administration than to voice their opinions. Additionally, the broad input of constituent groups took place at UT, but again, later in the process and through a series of statements of support that were issued by groups such as the faculty senate, unions, and student government. Administrators sought out the support from these various groups and went to speak to them personally to ask for their endorsement of the merger.

Need for validation. A major theme found in the data from both of the mergers was the *need for validation*, or validation used as a tool to gain broad support for the mergers. At both institutions, this took place with a series of documents that supported the mergers.

The first documents were the merger studies conducted by third parties. At UT, the study was conducted by Ryan Beck & Co. At UCD, the study was conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers. In both cases, these studies supported the mergers in concept, while saying that additional study needed to take place. At both institutions, merger proponents used the studies to point to the endorsement of the merger by a neutral party. The consultants' studies were used as a base of discussion and proponents were able to regularly refer to advantages suggested by the studies. One significant example of use of the consultant's report was when the MUO president took it to a private discussion with the publisher of *The Blade* in an attempt to secure his support for the merger.

An important document at UCD that supported the consolidation was the faculty survey that was conducted on the topic. While not overwhelmingly positive, the majority of participants indicated that they were either in support of the consolidation or indifferent. Merger proponents were able to use this perspective to point to faculty support of the consolidation.

As previously discussed, the statements of support from the various constituent groups at UT were important for administration to show that it had broad buy-in to the process. While there was some disagreement, particularly among faculty as to the process of the merger, in the end, all major constituent groups supported the concept and did so publicly with these resolutions of support. Representatives from the administration found this to be a valuable tool as they went to the respective boards of trustees, the board of regents, and the legislature to show a unified front—that the entire campus community was behind the merger.

Momentum. A powerful factor discussed by participants at both institutions was that of *momentum*. These participants described momentum as the positive force in support of the merger, particularly as nearly an unstoppable process supported by too many important players to possibly enable significant opposition. While momentum may have been more of a factor at UT with its less participatory process than at UCD, at both institutions, key players were solicited for their support from the very beginning or from early stages shortly thereafter. This powerful wave of support of key administrators, trustees, legislators and others made a statement to those who might be opposed to the merger to get on board or else be in the minority. One faculty member at UT said, “You know, the train was on the track and it was going to happen.” The former UT president described the momentum and its relationship to risk undertaken by key merger players:

[After the merger became public], there was so much positive momentum for it that I think people were willing to take more of a risk than they were at the beginning of the process. By the time we got really into this with the Ryan Beck study and all of that, I think there was much more of a willingness to take the risk involved in it, because they could see us really making it happen.

An Ohio legislator shared similar thoughts regarding the core issues that were addressed prior to the merger becoming public knowledge and, thus, allowing momentum to continue to build:

One of the things that made this merger successful, in my opinion, was the fact that a lot of the political considerations, the need to come in when you merge two major institutions; were already addressed and dealt with. When it became a public issue, there was much more support and momentum behind the merger than would have happened if it became public before everybody was on board.

Disconnect among views. A recurring theme that was seen predominantly at UCD was a *disconnect among views*. Constituent groups fully believed they were correct with opposite stances on the same issues. An example would be the notion posited by

UCD administration that the consolidation process was a transparent, participatory process, fully open to anyone who wanted to have input on the matter. Some faculty members were critical of this process and suggested that, while there may have been opportunities to participate, they were not honest efforts of a shared decision-making approach. These faculty members believed that the decision to consolidate had been predetermined and that anything they might say or do during open forums or similar sessions would have no significant bearing on the process. A similar disconnect among views took place at UT, though the speed of the process prevented opposition viewpoints from gaining much ground. Administrators that were interviewed believed campus participation processes in the merger to be sufficient, whereas some, such as the faculty union president, lamented the process to be far too fast for meaningful study and broad participation.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined results of the study including themes exhibited across the two institutions. Chapter Five will address these themes in the context of higher education decision-making, referencing the literature that suggested modern shifting processes. The research questions will be addressed with a detailed review of the main themes uncovered in the study in relation to the literature and conceptual framework. Each research question will be addressed utilizing all available data collected. A review of the conceptual framework will guide the discussion on the past and present university authority and control and suggest opportunities for further research.

Chapter Five

Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

This final chapter reviews the results of the study and provides analysis and recommendations. The chapter begins with a summary of the study, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and conceptual framework. Conclusions are then drawn, followed by implications for practice and future research.

Summary of the Study

The problem of a rapidly changing landscape of decision-making in American higher education was examined in the study. Eckel and Kezar (2006) suggested traditional models of decision-making in higher education were eroding in favor of modern, less participatory approaches. This shift was explored by researching decision-making processes that occurred during the early stages of two university mergers, instances of major organizational change.

Three research questions were designed to learn specific, detailed knowledge of the decision-making processes used during the preliminary stages of two recent mergers.

1. What were the methods of decision-making employed prior to the point when the merger was legislatively approved and by whom?
2. Do the methods utilized fall within or outside the framework of traditional academic decision-making?
3. What aspects of these methods align with the modern model of academic decision-making as described in the literature?

The literature reviewed in this study came from three major segments: that of higher education decision-making literature, higher education merger literature, and the literature related to the conceptual framework. The three areas are summarized here.

The higher education decision-making literature was reviewed in two distinct segments—traditional and modern approaches. The notion of traditional academic decision-making was characterized by broad, participatory processes of shared governance. The traditional model was described by Millett (1968), Floyd (1985), and the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities. While these participatory processes have been ingrained in American higher education for generations, some such as Eckel and Kezar (2006) believed that, due to a variety of factors, a major shift was taking place in American higher education decision-making. Characteristics of this shift entailed an erosion of shared governance, decreased participatory processes of decision-making, and an increase in top-down, business-like approaches.

As in the higher education decision-making literature, different approaches were discussed in the university mergers literature. Early research on the topic, as discussed by Millett (1976), showed that mergers of colleges and universities tended to be one institution bailing out another institution in financial disarray. Martin and Samels (1994), however, suggested that considering a merger for financial reasons was considering it for the wrong reasons. Martin and Samels suggested that mergers should be considered for achieving mutual growth—two institutions both coming from positions of strength to become even stronger together than apart.

The conceptual frameworks discussed in this study include Cohen et al.'s (1972) "garbage can" model of organizational decision-making and Cohen and March's (1986) notion of limited authority and control of the American college president. The "garbage can" model of organizational decision-making recognized that complex organizations such as universities have many disparate factors influencing people and events simultaneously. Cohen et al. described universities as organized anarchies characterized by three general properties—problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. They posited that decisions were made in three different ways: by resolution, by oversight, and by flight. At the core of Cohen et al.'s "garbage can" model were four independent streams (issues or groups of people) existing simultaneously—problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. Due to the confluence of the four aforementioned streams and the resulting organized anarchy, Cohen et al. wrote about the difficulties in solving problems in a direct manner. Similarly, Cohen and March (1986) suggested that the American college president has limited authority and control in colleges and universities due to the significant layered existence of university administrations. They posited that one individual can have only so much impact within these organizations due to the various constituencies with their many goals, projects, and priorities.

A qualitative method of inquiry was employed for this study using interviews and document analysis. Purposeful sampling was utilized to select individuals who were involved in the early stages of merger deliberations at the University of Toledo (UT) and the University of Colorado Denver (UCD). Additional participants were added based upon the recommendation of initial participants. Thirty-seven participants representing a

broad cross-section of constituents were interviewed from the two case study sites. Seventeen participants were interviewed at UT and 20 were interviewed from UCD. Document analysis served as a reinforcement of and supplement to data gathered in the interviews. Relevant merger documents were obtained from both case study institutions. A process of emergent coding revealed four major themes across the two study sites.

Discussion of Findings

Using a process of emergent coding, the data collected in the study were analyzed and organized into four themes. While these four themes were visible at both study institutions, each was exhibited more at one institution than the other. In some cases, the themes aligned with established academic decision-making and/or university merger literature, while some themes were unique to this study.

Two models of academic decision-making are examined in this study. First, traditional academic decision-making as described by Millett (1968) and Floyd (1985) was characterized by highly-participatory models of engagement, specifically with significant participation by faculty members and other campus constituent groups in organizational decision-making. Second, modern approaches of higher education decision-making were outlined by Eckel and Kezar (2006). These new models were characterized by top-down administrative processes with limited engagement of constituent groups outside of administration. Eckel and Kezar suggested that a reduction in broad participatory processes of decision-making coincided with an erosion of shared governance. Their stated reasons for the erosion included an enhanced focus for faculty on teaching and research, as well as emphasis on serving entrepreneurial outreach arms of the institution such as research institutes and community engagement.

Research Question 1

What were the methods of decision-making employed prior to the point when the merger was legislatively approved, and by whom?

Decision-making processes examined in this study ranged from traditional models espoused by Millett (1968) and Floyd (1985) to modern, emerging models detailed by Eckel and Kezar (2006). A variety of methods were employed during the mergers of the two case institutions. Initiation began for both mergers with executive administration, specifically the presidents of the institutions. From this point, broadened involvement varied between the campuses. Traditional notions of shared governance and decision-making as described by Millett and Floyd would have included elements such as bottom-up initiation, thorough and participatory study and evaluation, and possibly a vote of campus constituency groups. Modern models of decision-making as described by Eckel and Kezar would have found little to no participation by campus constituent groups and minimal public research and study of the issue with decisions initiated and completed in a top-down manner. What was seen in the two merger scenarios was that methods differed, with neither institution solidly fitting into either traditional or modern approaches of decision-making. One institution utilized predominantly closed-door discussions until the merger became public knowledge and the other institution immediately utilized a series of study committees, open forums, and surveys. These committees, forums, and surveys may be hallmarks of traditional academic decision-making processes, but the genuine nature of the activities was questioned by some participants. Careful selection was employed to a degree with the study committees and open forums to ensure that those involved with the processes were sympathetic to the cause. Subsequent to these activities, merger reports were finalized and approvals completed.

The two case study institutions utilized both inclusive and exclusive processes. While one institution seemingly employed much more exclusive processes than the other, it still promoted a voice for campus constituent groups with statements of support of the merger. The engagement with constituent groups followed very exclusive processes of merger deliberation tightly restricted to a select few individuals. The other institution enabled broad campus participation, though as previously mentioned, opportunities for involvement were strategically manipulated. The limited number of individuals involved during the early onset period at one institution was consistent with the view of Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001), in that a larger number of players at this point could hinder the process.

Leadership and presidential power at the two case institutions were found to have critical influence on merger processes. While the leaders of the two institutions approached the mergers differently, in both cases presidents and chancellors were able to achieve their goals through careful direction and management. The fact that the leaders were able to exert significant control was in contrast with the notion of limited authority of the American college president as posited by Cohen and March (1986).

Bensimon (1989) defined transactional leaders as accepting and maintaining a culture of an organization as it exists, while transformational leaders change organizational culture by introducing new beliefs and goals. Leadership at both case institutions exhibited elements of both transactional and transformational leadership. Traditional structures of governance were respected to one degree or another at both institutions, while leaders reinvented processes to fit the specific goals and needs to achieve the mergers. At one institution, extremely limited participation took place, while

at the other broader, carefully orchestrated involvement occurred. Extremely limited participation and carefully orchestrated involvement may be reflective of transformational leadership, with administrators seeking to exert significant influence. However, broad participation in and of itself was not necessarily reflective of transactional leadership—the administrators in that scenario were also found to be able to influence the direction of merger proceedings through specially-designed proceedings and selection of constituents.

Lastly, in both cases, as suggested by Bennis (1989) and Martin and Samels (1994), the presidents and chancellor became the conceptualizers, enabling a redefinition of the institution for all to see. This conceptualization from executive leadership, Martin and Samels said, also helped to enable the faculty to manage rather than to be managed.

Research Question 2

Do the methods utilized fall within or outside the framework of traditional academic decision-making?

Many of the methods of decision-making utilized in the two mergers fell within the realm of traditional models as detailed by Millett (1968) and Floyd (1985). These methods included the use of study committees to evaluate the mergers, open forums to discuss them, a survey, and statements of support by campus constituent groups. Decision-making elements outside the framework of traditional models included top-down initiation of processes and a majority of closed-door discussions, as was seen at one institution. Additionally, as discussed in the response to Research Question 1, the institution that utilized broad study committees and open forums utilized careful selection of participants, prompting the question as to whether these processes were truly open and genuine as publicly expected.

The notion of processes being highly inclusive has been linked to traditional approaches, with modern models being more exclusive with top-down direction. Participation at one institution encompassed many more individuals during the early onset stages than the other. While limited participation in campus decision-making tends to be reflective of modern approaches, it is consistent with early-onset decisions in the merger literature as outlined by Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001). Millett and Eastman and Lang implied that a decision as significant as a merger was typically handled differently than an everyday decision at a university, with fewer participants in the early stages to prevent opposition from fomenting. However, Millett and Eastman and Lang advocated broader participation of campus constituents in the latter stages of merger implementation.

Cohen and March's (1986) definition of the American college president as having limited control goes hand-in-hand with Cohen et al.'s (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice. The notion of limited authority and control and the garbage can model aligns with traditional approaches of decision-making as many players and factors collide, reducing the ability of the president to exert influence. At both case institutions, executive administrators, including presidents and the chancellor, were able to exert considerable influence and control, from initiating the processes to leading them in careful, thoughtfully directed ways. The executive administrators utilized tools reflective of Cohen and March's eight basic rules for leaders seeking to influence decisions. In essence, utilization of these rules enabled management of the four independent streams of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. While problems (reasons for merging), solutions (merger, other options), participants (the many voices of campus

constituents), and choice opportunities (to merge or not to merge) collided on campus, the presidents and chancellor exercised their authority and influenced decisions, therefore, effectively managing the streams.

Research Question 3

What aspects of these methods align with the modern model of academic decision-making as described in the literature?

As Miller (1999) cautioned of an impending paradigm shift in the way that American higher education was governed, Eckel and Kezar (2006) expounded on the shifting models characterized by less participation by campus constituents and more top-down decision-making processes. Elements of the modern model of academic decision-making were found in the two mergers, including top-down initiation of processes, extremely limited early-onset participation at one institution, and careful management and selection of participations at the other institution. The predominantly exclusive early-onset processes at one institution were largely reflective of the modern model of decision-making, though as discussed in the response to Research Question 2, consistent with academic merger literature by Millett (1976) and Eastman and Lang (2001).

The fact that presidential and chancellor authority defined virtually every facet of the two mergers, from the earliest onset forward, was highly reflective of modern models. Of note was the outlier in the UCD consolidation—while virtually every participant suggested that discussions began with the CU system president, the president went out of her way to stress that the idea for consolidation came from the faculty. Perhaps this remark by the president was an attempt to ensure the public perception that was eschewed by administration that deliberations were held in a highly traditional manner, respectful of common governance processes at the institution.

Harman and Harman (2003) suggested that “Visionary, transformational leadership that is sensitive to cultural factors greatly facilitates the merger processes” (p. 40). Executive leadership in the two mergers utilized careful, thoughtful techniques that were sensitive to local issues on the respective campuses. It was through this effective combination of approaches that leaders, utilizing modern techniques in otherwise traditional environments, managed to successfully implement the mergers.

Themes

Of the four themes presented in Chapter 4, the one exhibited most predominantly was that of an *avoidance of conflict* or *potential conflict*. Through carefully selected strategies, merger proponents such as top administrators and trustees were able to avoid conflict with key constituencies. This avoidance enabled key merger participants to navigate between commonly expected institutional decision-making processes such as broad and thorough study of the issue and the specific processes that were needed to effect the mergers. This “balanced” approach was suggested by Harman and Harman (2003) as a way to respect traditional processes while maintaining speed to prevent dissention from growing. At UT, avoidance of conflict was seen most visibly as those involved with the earliest stages of the merger, before it became public knowledge, made major decisions such as the decision to merge, the name of the combined institution, and the selection of the leadership of the merged university. Decisions made in such a limited manner were highly reflective of the modern model of academic decision-making as described by Eckel and Kezar (2006) who suggested a shift was taking place away from broad involvement by campus constituents. Virtually, all study participants at UT were clear that a significant degree of secrecy existed during the early stages of the process, a

desire not to open the process to public input and participation until later. There was a fear that opening the process to broad participation too early could potentially delay or stop the merger. At UCD, the notion of secrecy was not present to the same degree as at UT. The consolidation was public knowledge much earlier in the process, with broad participation on university committees examining the desirability and feasibility of the combination.

Another element that allowed the process at UT to avoid potential conflict was the speed of merger deliberations. According to participants, including the campus presidents, the rapid pace prevented unnecessary deliberation and kept the process moving toward the intended goal—approval of the merger. The rapid pace was kept up in part as UT administrators chose not to produce a formal feasibility study, as had taken place at UCD. UT retained Ryan Beck & Co. to conduct a desirability study, but as described by participants including the campus presidents, it was used as a tool to help validate the reasons for the merger—not as an opportunity to spur additional consideration of various elements of the merger. Also at UT, the so-called “frictional costs,” the costs to effect the merger, were not addressed in the enabling legislation, as commented upon by the former UT president and a member of the board of regents. While UT leaders spoke of the desire for assistance from the state with the frictional costs, it was not requested in the legislation, out of apprehension that the request could potentially inhibit the rapid, successful approval of the legislation. Statements were jointly signed by the two presidents regarding the continuity of union contracts post-merger as well as policies, which avoided potential conflict with reopening and negotiating contracts and policies. Finally, the careful engagement by the MUO

president with the publisher of *The Blade* was strategic and allowed for a climate of non-interference as the merger became public knowledge.

Administrators at UCD worked to avoid potential conflict in part from a psychological perspective. A mantra used consistently at UCD that helped ease apprehension of constituents was “an evolution, not a revolution.” Another mantra spoken frequently at UCD was “do no harm.” These catchphrases helped to guide the discussions of the consolidation and to settle concerns constituents had regarding how the consolidation would impact them.

While merger discussion and implementation processes ranged the gamut from relatively limited participation at UT to much broader participation at UCD, in both cases deliberate efforts were made to give constituents at least the *perception of involvement*, a sub-theme of *avoidance of conflict*. In essence, extending the perception of involvement was a manipulation of Cohen and March’s (1986) streams, with administrators utilizing their influence in an otherwise traditional environment. At UT, toward the end of the pre-merger discussion phase and prior to the merger approval in the legislature, the administration sought statements of support from major campus groups such as the faculty senate, student government, staff association, and more. There were also a small number of open forums at UT after the merger became public knowledge. At UCD, broad participation took place through representation on study committees, opportunities to speak at open forums, and a faculty survey. Whether or not these efforts of outreach were genuine in nature was a point of question among some participants, particularly from UCD faculty. However, the existence of the outreach efforts was, at least in part, to

satisfy desires of campus constituents for participation, as described by participants including study committee leaders.

To support the case of merger proponents at both institutions, various tools were used to enable *validation*. The use of tools to provide validation and demonstrate buy-in was reflective of the “culturally sensitive management” needed to “enhance the possibilities of cultural change,” as suggested by Locke (2007, p. 87). Administrators at both case sites were cognizant of the cultures within their organizations, considered the cultures within the context of merger decisions, and utilized validation tools to provide culturally sensitive management as described by Locke. This utilization, administrators said, smoothed the processes to improve the odds for successful merger implementation. At both institutions, third-party consultants were retained to issue desirability studies related to the merger. At UCD, a faculty survey was conducted to ascertain faculty perceptions of the potential consolidation. UT requested a series of statements of support from campus constituents groups endorsing the merger. In the end, all of these tools were utilized by the administrations to support the combinations in concept. The notion of validation relates to enabling information and approval for the administrations, as the perception of involvement relates to the broader campus constituent groups. In both themes, information was used to satisfy or placate groups of individuals. At UT, the Ryan Beck & Co. report was presented to gain the informal endorsement of the merger by individuals such as the publisher of *The Blade*. Additionally, the statements of support from the campus constituent groups at UT made for powerful testimonials to legislators in Columbus that the “entire campus” was in support of the merger.

A powerful theme seen in both mergers, but predominantly at UT, was that of *momentum*. The notion of utilizing speed in merger processes was suggested by Martin and Samels (1994) and Harman and Harman (2003) in an effort to build on successes, move past challenges, push the process toward its intended completion, and not let it stagnate. The element of momentum was carefully orchestrated at UT through the environment of extremely limited participation during the early stages of merger discussion. Participants remarked that only those people absolutely necessary were involved in the earliest deliberations. At the point when the merger became public knowledge, major issues had been addressed and the support of critical merger players had been secured. Therefore, when the merger became public knowledge, there was already more than enough of a groundswell of support that potential merger opponents would have been a small minority. Bringing the key constituents on board with their support before the public phase and handling potential major controversial issues such as institutional name and who would be president allowed the merger momentum to grow beyond a pace that could be slowed or stopped. The gathering of momentum did not occur in the same manner at UCD, but many key individuals stepped forward early in the process to signify their support, and momentum continued to grow with the completion of each study committee, faculty survey, and open forum. Given the nuances of different cultures and decision-making expectations at the two institutions, members of the administration utilized momentum differently. At UCD, momentum grew over a series of study and evaluation events; at UT, momentum was built with one large, overpowering wave during the early stages, before knowledge of the merger became public. The statements of support from constituent organizations at UT pushed the process from one

where selected individuals were on-board to essentially one where the entire community was on record in support. That broad coalition made a powerful statement in the community and the legislature.

Seen more predominantly at UCD than at UT, was a theme of *disconnect among views* on the consolidation, in which individuals from varying perspectives (i.e., administration and faculty) firmly believed they were right. This disconnect applied to the reasoning behind the consolidation as well as the processes utilized to affect it. While consolidation proponents in the UCD administration believed that there were significant, obvious reasons to effect the consolidation, those among select faculty members and others questioned those reasons. Both sides believed that they were “in the right” on these matters. Additionally, virtually all administrators interviewed stated that a plethora of opportunities existed for broad participation in the process through the study committees, open forums, and faculty survey. Conversely, some faculty members questioned the validity of these opportunities, saying that they were just for show. These faculty members suggested that the consolidation outcome had been predetermined, and that participation in any of the aforementioned opportunities for involvement would be a waste of time and effort as concerns would not be adequately heard or addressed.

Conceptual Frameworks

Cohen et al.’s (1972) “garbage can” model of organizational choice was found to carry some weight in this study, while Cohen and March’s (1986) notion of limited authority and control of the American college president was not found. Cohen and March suggested that, due to the many facets of higher education institutions, presidents simply had limited control. In essence, presidents could affect only so much change in

these complex organizations with many players all seeking to have influence. This study found that this notion of limited control by the president simply did not apply at the two case institutions. The presidents exerted significant control through the use of both traditional and modern academic decision-making processes. At UT, the two presidents had very significant, if not exclusive control, in the mergers. The merger concept was driven by the two presidents, and they devised the strategy for moving forward, including the additional participants as the process developed. At UCD, the University of Colorado president led the initiation of consolidation discussions based upon her experience at another institution. She worked with the campus chancellors to devise strategy for the initial players who would lead the rest of the way. There were broad participatory processes throughout the UCD consolidation—in essence enabling the many layers of the university to function as they normally do. However, these processes were at the initiation of the university president and set in motion by those who she directed.

The concept of the “garbage can” model of organizational decision-making described by Cohen et al. (1972) was seen to a moderate degree in the two study mergers as far as the streams functioning independently. Any absence of the “garbage can” functioning, however, may be attributed to careful manipulation reflective of Cohen and March’s (1986) eight basic rules for leaders seeking to influence decisions. Cohen et al. described the garbage can model of decision-making as four independent streams: problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities. They suggested that these streams were independent of each other and did not directly correlate (i.e., specific solutions addressed for a specific problem). They posited that, due to the various complex elements in organizations, the garbage can model existed for organizational

decision-making with decisions happening by resolution, by oversight, and by flight. This process may have existed more in higher education's past, alongside the theory suggested by Cohen and March of limited control by a university president. During the days in American higher education with much more participatory decision-making structures, it was likely that the various players involved could have contributed both to a reduction in authority and control by the university president, as well as a "garbage can" climate of decision-making. While utilizing a system of decision-making that gave authority to many individuals in the organization, it was possible that the four streams as described by Cohen and March could have indeed existed independently from one another. However, in modern day decision-making, with limited participants, this framework may not apply to the degree it once did. The decision to limit extremely the number of participants early in the UT merger lent itself to one very specific solution (to merge or not to merge) for one problem, handled by a few individuals at a specific point in time. The UCD consolidation was similar, though due to a more participatory governance system at the institution, more individuals were involved to address the problem, with other solutions discussed during an expanded timeframe. In the end, clear solutions (the mergers) were devised at both institutions to satisfy the problems of the academic, financial, and political climates at the time. The situations were not characterized by ambiguous processes with independent streams, likely because of strong leadership among executive administration guiding the processes with a desired end result. It was clear that the university presidents in the two case institutions exhibited some of the eight basic rules outlined by Cohen and March for leaders seeking to influence decisions in colleges and universities. The eight rules were spend time, persist,

exchange status for substance, facilitate opposition participation, overload the system, provide garbage cans, manage unobtrusively, and interpret history. Leaders at both institutions spent considerable time and energy on the mergers and, in both cases, status was exchanged for substance—at UT one president was willing to step down in order to facilitate the merger, while at UCD one campus chancellor was admittedly in the role on a temporary basis. At UCD, opposition was facilitated through various participatory processes and management was unobtrusive and went with the flow of traditional processes at the university. By utilizing these rules, administrators were able to exert considerable influence in the mergers.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions were drawn from this study in conjunction with a review of the literature. The examination of the two mergers allowed for a unique look at decision-making, with elements of traditional and modern academic decision-making processes exhibited. While the two approaches of higher education decision-making may be clearly defined, in reality they exist to varying degrees at different institutions. The conclusions discussed here address the intermediary zone highlighted by shifting models of decision-making.

Institutions in Transition

Higher education in the United States today encompasses institutions that are in transition in many ways, not the least of which includes their management and governance. Pressures to change bear down from many angles and administrators find themselves needing to adapt, even though the changes taking place happen over an extended period of time. It took hundreds of years for traditional academic processes to

take root in American higher education. Based upon governance changes to date as described in the literature and discussed by participants in this study, one may speculate that, in the future, a vast majority of higher education management decisions will take place in an environment characterized by less participation by campus constituents. In the meantime, administrators find themselves in an age not quite settled into either approach—shifting away from participatory processes, yet not fully engaged into a majority of top-down decision-making. This disparity in perspectives was reflected by statements from a UCD administrator, “We have a pretty strong shared governance model here and to not continue that path with such a large decision for the University of Colorado in general, would not have been the right thing to do.” and the former UT president:

If you really tried to engage everybody in a year-long conversation on this thing, and listen to everybody, you would never get there because the negatives can shake the confidence of the positives. So, we agreed to do it as fast as we could. To do only those things that was necessary in order to get it past the Legislature and the Governor, to make it quick, to make it decisive. To not stop for anyone, but keep that momentum going and to do it in the fastest time possible and to let everyone know that this thing is not going to be subject to highly-detailed studies and conversations.

These two quotes may reflect varying perspectives that exist in higher education today with regard to the need and desire for participatory processes in decision-making.

The “Grey Zone”

The shift in decision-making approaches in American higher education leaves a “grey zone”—a transitional period and model—as institutions find themselves moving away from traditional approaches of decision-making and toward more modern, less participatory modes. Organizations that represent campus constituencies still exist, albeit with diminished recognition and authority in many cases. Constituent organizations exist

because of the vested interest that these groups have in the university. It is to everyone's benefit that the university is prosperous and successful in its mission. As long as these organizations, such as faculty and student senates, and faculty and staff unions exist, some credence must be given to these organizations and some level of involvement in institutional decision-making will continue to exist. While internal and external pressures wear at these mechanisms and organizations, if trends continue as they have for many institutions to date, the future of these organizations may be continued devolution and less stature in the academy. Should that devolution happen, the grey zone will transition to a clearer, solidified form of higher education decision-making, one utilizing a majority of non-participatory processes of governance.

While decision-making models are shifting, the needs of day-to-day higher education management continue to exist. University administrators find themselves caught between old and new models, but do not have the luxury to press for culture change toward one end of the spectrum or another. Rather, administrators must effectively manage the grey zone to achieve success. This study found that administrators at both case study institutions uniquely tailored their merger decision-making approaches given the respective expectations, norms, and environments at their universities. They did not restrict themselves to standard institutional approaches; rather they devised unique approaches for the complex scenarios of the mergers. Similarly, embrace of a singular model of institutional decision-making will leave administrators satisfying a limited number of campus constituent groups, while alienating others, enabling gridlock. Through careful listening, engagement, and management, astute administrators will adeptly play to both approaches as appropriate, employing just the

right mix of recognizing traditional approaches of decision-making while utilizing more modern approaches as necessary. This process was described by the current UT president:

Rapid decision-making or making hard decisions is not incompatible with appropriate input. Participatory governance, participatory leadership is not only possible, it is necessary in today's world. There is no question about that. The problem, however, is that you need to put limits on it.

In detailing what he thought it took to reduce the cycle time of decision-making, the current UT president stated that the time can be reduced from institutional norms with participatory processes, though:

Probably not [including those who] want to be involved, probably [only including those who] need to be involved. There is a distinction there. You know, this is to some extent about control needs of stakeholders, right? If all stakeholders believe that they want to be involved then your decision-making cycle plan is going to be very long. Worse than that, you don't make hard decisions.

Implications for Practice

In today's shifting landscape of American higher education, particularly with respect to governance processes, this study provided several points of consideration for administrators and other campus constituents. It is clear that a variety of pressures are at play reshaping the way universities are run. While American colleges and universities are diverse in their modes of administration and culture, the astute higher education administrator must be prepared to handle a delicate balancing act between old and new models. While major organizational decisions can never please all constituents, administrators who carefully weigh satisfaction and efficiency among the broadest population in conjunction with established institutional norms will be successful. Finding the right balance between traditional and modern decision-making models, with a

common ground given institutional values, allowed administrators in the case institutions to achieve goals and approval from constituents.

This study found varying levels of decision-making structures in place at each case institution. At UCD, many traditional shared governance processes were exhibited during the consolidation, whereas at UT, more modern processes took place without as much participation by campus constituencies as at UCD. However, in both cases, the processes were driven by the administration. The decisions involved in these two mergers were carefully considered by the leaders of the universities, initially, in both cases, by the presidents. At UCD, the president made the choice to involve constituent groups earlier in the process, and in a more substantive way than at UT. The key to providing effective campus leadership is understanding the institutional dynamics, along with the desires for an end result. An astute administrator will recognize all needs and devise appropriate strategy with these variables considered. This recognition and strategy development took place at both study institutions, with administrators carefully crafting merger processes while being cognizant of organizational and cultural norms at the respective institutions, allowing for the mergers to become reality.

Aside from assisting administrators in managing decision-making processes in changing times, this study also provided information to those interested in planning university mergers. While there are many facets to orchestrating an organizational change such as a merger, of critical importance are the early stages, as focused upon in this study. Administrators at both UCD and UT expressed concern that if the processes were handled differently, a wide range of potential problems could have scuttled efforts toward the merger.

Future Research

Numerous additional opportunities for research exist in the areas of American higher education decision-making, particularly in processes and mergers. This study examined decision-making processes that occurred during two university mergers, instances of significant organizational change. Through looking at these instances of change, both traditional and modern academic decision-making processes were seen. Current and future higher education administrators need to have thorough understandings of traditional and modern models of decision-making processes and the continued development of predominant models to be successful.

In the field of higher education decision-making, an area that may be of growing importance for future research are recent “failed” presidencies. These could be defined as presidencies that lasted much shorter than average, and also that were characterized by public strife among campus constituents. This strife may be an indication of ineffective management and governance of various interests on campus, and the failure to appropriately lead within the context of the “grey zone.” Several participants at UT mentioned a presidency such as this in the recent past. While many negative factors can be at play during a failed presidency, by researching the reasons why a president was involuntarily forced out of his or her position, the researcher may gain critical knowledge about the administrative and/or cultural failings of the leadership.

A variety of study can take place regarding the use and role of modern-day faculty, student, staff, and other similar governance organizations, such as faculty and student senates. As described by Eckel and Kezar (2006), faculty and other campus professionals find that they now have many duties to perform outside of service on

committees and other governance structures to the university. Organizational studies can expand upon the research of Eckel and Kezar to survey constituency groups across the country regarding their current involvement in organizational decision-making, including the reasons limiting them from participation at greater levels. Similarly, the perceptions of shared governance by leadership at the presidential, administrative, and board level would assist in understanding the metamorphosis taking place in higher education.

As the field of higher education merger research is very limited, many areas are extant for future research. Virtually any angle of a university merger can be examined with benefit to the higher education community. This study examined the early administrative decision-making processes in the mergers. Many other opportunities for study of the early stages would be beneficial, including the examination of the desirability and feasibility studies that take place at merger institutions. Specifically, research into the validity of early concerns as well as the follow-through on study suggestions could be of value. As there is extremely limited literature regarding the financial outcomes and savings of university mergers, this area of research could be highly valuable. Further study on merging campus cultures can be of great assistance to administrators in positions to consider and implement mergers. A different type of merger, that of the non-voluntary variety, can be examined and will have a different set of management and cultural issues to be studied. These “forced” mergers are those set in place by legislatures or other state governance organizations, enabling the perception of the merger done “to” the institutions, not “by” them. Finally, many areas of outcomes can be considered after mergers have taken place, including academic and research synergies realized over time, as well as changes in institutional rankings.

Summary

This study examined decision-making processes in two university mergers, instances of major organizational change. Higher education administrators currently face unprecedented change in many facets of university governance, particularly with respect to decision-making. Research questions sought to ascertain what type of decision-making processes were exhibited in the mergers, whether they were reflective of traditional academic decision-making, and what aspects of the methods aligned with the modern model of academic decision-making.

Varying degrees of adherence to traditional models of academic decision-making were found in this study, with closer alignment to traditional models at UCD and less alignment at UT. More modern decision-making processes were exhibited at UT, highlighted by more top-down decisions and less broad participation of campus constituents than at UCD. While both merger processes were initiated by members of the administration, processes at UCD quickly became public discussion with a wide spectrum of participants involved. The UT merger did not enter the public sphere until key merger decisions had been made and the support garnered from key players.

Four major themes were prevalent in the two mergers, those of an *avoidance of conflict*, a *need for validation*, *momentum*, and a *disconnect among views*. The avoidance of conflict and potential conflict was particularly visible at UT as participation in the early stages of merger discussions was very limited. The need for validation during the mergers was highlighted by third-party consultants' studies at both institutions, a series of constituent organizations' endorsements at UT, and open forums and a faculty survey at UCD. The theme of momentum was particularly evident at UT as key merger questions

were addressed and critical university and community players brought into the fold prior to the public phase. This allowed for enough momentum in support of the merger for proponents to continue to push it forward in the public phase. Lastly, the disconnect among views was clearly visible at UCD, as consolidation supporters, such as members of the administration, felt that opportunities for involvement were plenty, with consolidation opponents, such as faculty, questioning the worthwhile nature of opportunities, such as committee participation, open forums, and surveys, wondering if the consolidation decision had been predetermined.

In the end, this study found elements of both traditional and modern approaches of decision-making in American higher education. Given an organizational change to the degree of a merger, the study provided a unique lens through which to view decision-making. While there will continue to be merits and failings of each model as times continue to change, the incisive modern university administrator will recognize key elements of each, in conjunction with institutional values and cultures, in making determinations that will lead the modern higher education institution to success.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Basic/demographic information

1. What was your position (title, office/board) at the time of the merger?
2. At what point did you become involved and what was your role in the earliest stages of merger discussions?
3. At what point did the merger become public?

Participants

4. Who were the key participants and their roles during the earliest stages of merger discussions?
5. How was it determined who would be involved in merger discussions?
6. In what ways were critical merger participants engaged in merger decision-making?

Decision processes

7. Describe typical pre-merger decision-making processes on the yet-to-be-merged campuses.
8. Describe some of the major decisions of the merger and how they came to be.
9. Describe a major non-merger decision that occurred during this period.
10. What were the key elements or decisions immediately before the merger became public?

APPENDIX B

Documents Analyzed

DOCUMENTS ANALYZED

The University of Toledo

University Combination Recognition Agreement (UT-AAUP), February 20, 2006.

University Combination Recognition Agreement (CWA and AFSCME), January 30, 2006.

Medical University of Ohio at Toledo Board of Trustees Resolution 11-12-05: Endorsement of a Combination or Merger of the Medical University of Ohio at Toledo and The University of Toledo, n.d.

The University of Toledo Board of Trustees Resolution 12-2006: Resolution Approving in Concept the Combination of The University of Toledo and the Medical University of Ohio at Toledo, December 6, 2005.

City of Toledo Res. 783-05: Expressing support of The University of Toledo (UT) and Medical University of Ohio's (MUO) Initiative to Seriously Consider Merger, December 15, 2005.

Regional Growth Partnership Resolution in Support of the Merger of the University of Toledo and the Medical University of Ohio, December 12, 2005.

Proponent Testimony for State of Ohio HB 478: Daniel M. Johnson, Ph.D., January 31, 2006. [Merger enabling legislation]

Proponent Testimony for State of Ohio HB 478: Lloyd A. Jacobs, M.D., January 31, 2006. [Merger enabling legislation]

State of Ohio HB 478, 126th General Assembly, Regular Session (LSC 126 1660-2), n.d. [Merger enabling legislation]

Medical University of Ohio at Toledo Faculty Senate Resolution: Resolution of support for the possible merger of the Medical University of Ohio and the University of Toledo, n.d.

The University of Toledo Faculty Senate Resolution: Resolution of support for the possible merger of the University of Toledo and the Medical University of Ohio, December 6, 2005.

Medical University of Ohio at Toledo and The University of Toledo Joint Presidential Announcement on Human Resources Policies, n.d.

Medical University of Ohio at Toledo and The University of Toledo Joint Presidential Memorandum of Understanding, December 16, 2005.

Medical University of Ohio at Toledo and The University of Toledo Joint Presidential Policy Continuation Statement, March 3, 2006.

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The University of Toledo Graduate Council: A Resolution from the University of Toledo Graduate Council concerning the proposed merger of The University of Toledo and The Medical University of Ohio, n.d.

Ryan Beck & Co. Business Combination Analysis Prepared for the Medical University of Ohio at Toledo, September 2005.

The University of Colorado Denver

The University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and The University of Colorado at Denver Consolidation Study, Report from the Steering Committee for the Feasibility Study, April 2004.

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Focused Visit Report, Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, Consolidation of the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, December 2004.

Faculty Views on Consolidation: Executive Summary 2, Part 1, HSC & UCD Faculty Assemblies, n.d.