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An Investigation of Leadership Factors and Traits That Led to and Supported the Formation of a Multi-University Partnership

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to discover what leadership traits and factors led to the formation and support of a multi-university partnership between three faith-based, higher education institutions. Data was collected using interviews, documents analysis, and leadership surveys. Fifteen leaders, five from each institution, were invited to participate in this study. They included three presidents, three provosts, and nine vice-presidents from various departments who played a role at some point during the process of forming the partnership. Ten leaders from the 15 invited, accepted to participate in this study. They included all three presidents, three provosts, and four vice-presidents. After the researcher collected data, he analyzed the. Data analysis revealed leadership traits and factors that led to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. Leadership traits that emerged included the ability of leaders to lead, to empower others, to care for others, to build relationships, to communicate effectively, and to collaborate across departments and institutions. Leadership factors that emerged fell into two major categories; mission, and the impact of changes that were taking place in the environment within which these institutions operate. Mission focused on a history of shared faith and values, because of a common beginning shared by all three institutions, as a result of being founded by the same larger institution. Furthermore, mission included a desire to continue advancing a "Christ-centered" education. Changes in the current operating environment centered on challenges; both economic and technological, that have had a great impact in terms of how education is delivered, and have forever altered how higher education institutions operate.

Keywords: leadership factors, leadership traits, organizational change, multi-university partnership, higher education leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, change leadership.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of Boniface Ngezaho, Dominique Ngezaho, Adele Buhendwa, Godelive Tambo, and Mekonnen Damtew.

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All honor and glory be given to my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth without whom this journey would have never started, nor existed. I am because he is, and for that I am truly grateful—Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 125:1

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction of the Problem

The 2007–2009 economic recession, which affected most sectors of the economy, had a profound impact on higher education; both private and public institutions were affected. According to Brown and Hoxby (2014), the impact was observed in terms of cuts in government funding, a decline in gifts, donations, and endowments. However, higher education institutions currently face economic challenges that go as far back as three decades (Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport, 2011). Today, higher education not only faces challenges related to the economy, it also faces problems resulting from constant political and technological changes (Hayes, 2012). As a result, these problems have created uncertainties for most institutions. According to Hayes, higher education has always been challenged by uncertainties, although in the past, they were unique to individual institutions, which is currently not the case, as those uncertainties appear to equally affect all institutions (Hayes, 2012).

These widespread challenges, which have created uncertainties are of both national and international in scope, and their combined effects have placed an ongoing financial burden on higher education institutions (Staley, Dennis, & Trinkle, 2011), especially private institutions with small endowments, according to Supiano (2008). Top issues have included an observed decline at the national level among students often referred to as "traditional college-age population" attending college (Fain, 2014). They also include the impact of technology on college offerings (Hayes, 2012), and the continually increasing cost of attendance, which has placed a great burden on families, according to Farrell (2005). A combination of these challenges, and the quest for higher education institutions to find stability, has therefore triggered a constant evaluation of how these institutions operate. The result of these challenges,

organizational change has become a regular part of operations for most higher education institutions (Marcus, 2013).

While higher education has exhibited a determination to overcome these challenges by putting into place specific measures and programs, different institutions are driven by divergent motivations. According to Marcus (2013), while some institutions are determined to overcome these challenges for survival reasons, others are doing it for sustainability reasons (Denneen & Dretler, 2012), and others are doing it to simply advance their institutional mission (Zemsky et al., 2005). Although the above-mentioned strategies differ depending on individual institutions, Fullan (2011) stated that leadership is central if these institutions are to attain survival, sustainability, and/or advancement of institutional mission. This next section will introduce this study's conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

According to Jabareen (2009), "a conceptual framework is a product of qualitative processes of theorization" (p. 1). Ravitch and Riggan (2012) defined a conceptual framework in terms of the importance of an argument about the topic being studied, why both the topic and the proposed means to conduct the study, as they relate to appropriateness and rigor matter. They further stated that an argument referred to "a series of sequenced, logical propositions, the purpose of which is to convince the reader of the study's importance and rigor" (p. 7). A conceptual framework, based on these two definitions, can be formulated as a sum of concepts that are intertwined, which combination intend to help understand what is being studied. However, Jabareen (2009) definition, which was an extended definition, as opposed to the above shortened version, matched the scope of work for this research study. According to him, a conceptual framework can be compared to a web of concepts, which when interconnected

"provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena" (p. 51). This study's conceptual framework consisted of leadership, as the main conceptual framework, and organizational change and purpose, as sub-themes. Purpose covered survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment.

The above mentioned conceptual framework and its sub-themes resulted from recurring themes in the literature, the emphasis of which were on higher education leadership, organizational change, and organizational purpose in the 21st century. While leadership focused on style(s) of leading used by leaders in order to help their institutions overcome challenges and remain viable, organizational change concentrated more on change, and its significance at all levels of an organization. Furthermore, organizational change centered on change as a process, which has many stages. Organizational purpose focused mainly on what motivated organizations to keep moving forward.

In the words of Kouzes and Posner (1995), "leadership is an act, or instance of leading" (p. 18). They went on stating that a leader is someone who "guides or directs others" (p. 18). And when they said others, they meant a group of people, or an organization. The importance of leadership comes from the major implications it has with regard to the health of a given organization, because without leadership, institutions would not exist according to Kouzes and Posner (1995). To clarify more on the importance of leadership, Fullan (2011) stated that people make institutions, and therefore institutions need leaders to guide people, because leaders are mentors and role models who motivate others to innovate. Furthermore, the initiation, implementation and support of organizational mission, changes, and plans of actions, is done through leaders. Thus, in Fullan's opinion, there is an undeniably strong connection between

how an organization performed, its success and the performance of its leader. In other words, leadership is an invaluable key piece to organizational success.

In order to demonstrate how connected leadership and organization success work hand in hand, Puzziferro (2012) said that for an institution lacking leaders who can affect change, it was impossible for such an institution to effectively operate, much less succeed. In a similar way, Al Sharija and Watters (2012) highlighted the importance of leadership in higher education, especially in the current operating environment, which has proven extremely challenging to successfully navigate.

According to Fullan (2011), leadership is key not only for an organization's ability to initiate change, but also to see through its implementation, with survivability being the driving force for some institutions (Puzziferro, 2012), while sustainability, and mission attainment drive other institutions (Fullan, 2011). Thus, when it comes to change, understanding effective leadership was crucial, because it entailed comprehending multiple approaches to leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). To understand multiple approaches to leadership meant understanding several different styles of leadership. Therefore, the styles of leadership that are covered in this study include servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership.

Organizational change and purpose, in addition to leadership, were also covered. The investigation of organizational change focused mainly on Kurt Lewin's model of organizational change, while purpose focused on survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment.

Leadership. This section will briefly introduce leadership styles, which will be covered in detailed later on in this chapter. The styles to be briefly introduced are servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership is "a philosophy and set of leadership practices that focus on shared power" (Greenleaf, 1977. p. 1). He further stated that a servant leader puts the needs of his or her followers first, while helping them develop, so they can perform at their best. Therefore, instead of leading first, a servant leader seeks to serve first. Greenleaf showed that with servant leadership the first inclination is toward serving, which is then followed by leading. According to Irving (2011), what makes servant leadership a unique and successful style of leading is the focus on followers and their well-being. This emphasis on followers helps strengthen the servant leader, especially as they seek to make positive change both on personal and professional levels.

Transformational leadership. Burns (1978) viewed transformational leadership as a style of leadership that seek to engage both leader and follower in a way that they can raise each other to "higher levels of motivations and morality" (p. 20). Burns further stated that leaders who use transformational leadership "ascertain their followers' motives," and through a "holistic approach" help followers "fulfill their needs for self-actualization" (p. 20). This holistic approach in turn, transforms subordinates into leaders themselves. Expanding on Burns definition, Cox (2001) equated transformational leadership with change leadership, because of its ability to empower leaders to affect change.

Business leadership. According to Kantrow (2009), Peter Drucker's work in business leadership has been foundational, and has had a great impact on modern day business practices. Hawkins (2009), referencing Drucker's work, defined business leadership using resource management, as well as moral and ethical operations. Hawkins emphasized the importance of outcomes in business leadership. And according to him, there are guiding principles, which include being client-focused, a leader's ability to have a vision, communicate successfully, and

be a good role model, that make business leadership successful as a style of. In Hawkin's view, the focus on outcomes is what guides this strong focus on both personnel and clients when it comes to business leadership.

Situational leadership. Conceived by Paul Hersey in the late 1960s, according to Blanchard (1987), situational leadership promotes combining different aspects of various leadership styles, as a response to different circumstances. Hersey (1979) viewed situational leadership as the type of style that encourages flexibility when it comes to how tasks are executed. As such, leaders who use this style of leading must adjust according to their followers' developmental levels, if they are to influence their followers. Blanchard (1987) noted that adaptability in situational leadership is mostly for the leader to do, and not the follower. Thus, in addition to adaptability, situational leadership as a style of leading centers on evolving, and changing with circumstances (Hersey, 1979).

Organizational change. As a living entity, change is a regular part of any institution, especially in the current, ever-changing operating environment (Ahmed, Noman, & Asim, 2014). Organizational change can take many forms. Change can happen at an organization structure, it can be strategic, technological, and it can also focus on organization culture and its operations. Ahmed et al., (2014) referred to organizational change as a process in which an institution's performance is optimized in order to reach a different, desired state of being or operating. According to Haveman, Russo, and Meyer (2001), organizational change can occur as a result of internal processes, or as a response to outside influencers. Change can happen within an organization because of a challenge or crisis, to which an organization has to respond. The second way that change can occur may be in terms of a reaction to a market environment. Organizational change can happen periodically in some instances, and can be something that is

continuous in other instances. Given the ever-changing operating environment, organization change is currently seen as a continuous process, according to Ahmed et al., 2014).

Given the current, constantly and rapidly changing climate economically, technologically, politically, socially, and the impact such changes are having on many industries, and most specifically higher education, organizational change has increasingly become a priority for many organization, and this prioritizing of organizational change has shown no signs of slowing down (Haveman et al., 2001). According to Levine (2014), the current digital age has made disruptive change an impossible challenge to avoid. Therefore, whether or not higher education is willing, it will still undergo change. Levine went further stating that existing institutions can lead the change or become its victim.

Although many organizational change theories exist, Kurt Lewin's Unfreeze–Change–Refreeze theory of organizational change, remains the most used even today. According to Burnes (2004), change is a process that makes organizations' leaders become aware of the crucial role they play, when it comes to their organizational quest to reach a desired new state of being, or operating. Once organizations have reached desired new level of being, this new level is then solidified into a new norm (Burnes, 2004). Since Kurt Lewin developed this model, there have been several new theories of organizational change. Among the most recent, and widely referenced are Kotter's (1996) *8-Step Model of Change*, and Hiatt (2006) *ADKAR Change Management Model.* These theories are complementary to Lewin's, and will also be used in this study's analysis.

Kotter's (1996) *8-Step Model of Change* outlined eight critical success factors, which are crucial for successful organizational change. They include "establishing a sense of extraordinary urgency, and create short-term wins, which ultimately lead to changing an organization's

culture" (Kotter, 1996, p. 2). He developed his model after watching several companies work to make fundamental changes as a response to new changes and challenges. After observing that some companies succeeded, while others failed, Kotter concluded that change being a process in itself, was also a "series of changes" (p. 2).

Hiatt's (2006) *ADKAR Change Management Model* presented a framework for understanding how change at the individual level had an impact on change that took place at the organizational level. His observations and conclusions came from his extensive research on many organizations undergoing change. He observed that failure in organizational change was not a result of poor training, or inadequate communication, nor was success a result of excellent management, best vision, or solution to the challenge. Instead, he observed that successful change happened by knowing how to facilitate change, starting with an individual.

Purpose. Considering the current climate of rapid changes in higher education, which include changes in population demographic, a workforce that continues to diversify, constant changes in technological development, as well as changing economies, organizational purpose has become a top priority, according to Haveman et al., (2001). As stated by Levine (2014), the current digital age has made change an impossible challenge to avoid at all levels of an organization's operations. According to McCluskey and Winter (2014), many sectors of the economy, including higher education, have felt the full impact of this current digital age. They further noted that it is not just the digital age that is having an impact, but higher education has to contend with additional competition, as well as changing landscapes, which have challenged practices and long held beliefs. Whether or not higher education is willing, it has, and will still undergo change, because change, which has always been part of organizational operations, has been amplified by the current digital age. As a result, in the words of Levine (2014), higher

education institutions are in a position where they can either lead the change or become its victim.

For leaders at institutions that have embraced change, purpose has become a crucial part of how they successfully navigate change. With digital age challenges, increased competition, and changing landscapes seeming to be here for the long run (McCluskey & Winter, 2014), and given the prediction of experts that many institutions will go out of business (Woodhouse, 2015), purpose, which can be either one of, or a combination of survivability, sustainability and mission attainment, has never been more crucial, according to Haveman et al., (2001).

Statement of This Study's Focus

With widespread challenges of both national and international scope, which continue to impact higher education as a whole, and their combined effects placing an ongoing financial burden on higher education institutions, according to Staley, Dennis, and Trinkle, (2011), higher education institutions' leaders have to figure out a way to overcome these challenges and achieve survival, sustainability, and continue to further their purpose. To achieve survival, sustainability, and advancement of institutional mission, leadership is perceived as being a key component, according to Fullan, (2011).

Purpose of the Study

The researcher wanted to discover what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership. This study was a multiple case study of three faith-based institutions that came together to create a multi-university partnership, which the researcher referenced using the following pseudonyms: *Institution A*, *Institution B,* and *Institution C*.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

What leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership? The following sub-questions were investigated:

1. What type of individual leadership style(s) was (were) prominent within the leadership of each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
2. In what ways did the style(s) reflect their collective, and institution style(s)?
3. What influences the leader(s) decision-making process?
4. What influenced the decision-making process of each individual leaders, and as a collective, within each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
5. How did individual leaders within each institution, and as a collective group, make decisions in relation to the partnership?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

In addition to helping the researcher find out what leadership traits and factors of went into the formation of a multi-university partnership, this study provides an opportunity for further research, especially for anyone interested in knowing why the partnership eventually dissolved. Another benefit of this study was the potential to be replicated in another setting. There was further potential for other institutions that were planning to start a partnership, to reference leadership factors and traits discovered in this study, and use them to start and support their own partnership.

Definition of Key Terms

Leadership factors: This term is defined as components, characteristics that contribute to leadership (Eigen, n.d.)

Leadership traits: This term is defined as aspects of a leader's character. A leader's attributes, qualities of leadership (McCormick, 1994)

Multi-university partnership: This term is defined as a partnership of multiple universities. An association of two or more universities (Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, & Babies (2012).

Small endowment institutions: This term is defined as institutions with financial assets of less than $100 million (ACE, 2014)

Organizational change: This term is defined as change that takes place when the working of an organization is altered, moving from one state into a different state of operating (Haveman et al., 2001)

Purpose: This term is defined as the reason why a decision or decisions are made. The motive behind an actionable decision (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

Survivability: This term is defined as the ability to withstand challenges and continue to exist. The capacity to overcome challenges and thrive (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

Sustainability: This term is defined as maintaining a desired level of operation. The ability to support success (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

Mission attainment: This term is defined as achieving stated institutional mission. The capacity to attain an institution stated mission (Merriam Webster, n.d.)

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that participants in this study were truthful in their answers, and would be available for interviews, and would respond to surveys in a timely manner. The researcher further assumed that the instruments for data collection would work as intended, and access, especially to institutional documents would be granted without limitation, or

classification. Finally, the researcher presumed that his closeness to the study and participants would not hinder his abilities to collect data, or affect access to data. Given the partnership dissolution, the researcher assumed that participants would be forthcoming and willing to freely speak about the partnership.

Delimitations

The author focused on upper management for this study, and specifically leaders at the executive level, because they were the main decision-drivers and makers. Interviews were collected both face-to-face and using online method to minimize the cost associate with data collection given different site locations. Interviews were limited to within 60 minutes, often after work, which allowed for participants' commitment.

Limitations

This research study was limited to a small group of key leaders within private, higher education institutions because of their overall involvement in the creation of the multi-university partnership. This study's consideration of leadership was limited to the following leadership styles: servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership, because these styles emerged from the literature as foundational. The focus on a small group of leaders limited the scope of the study, as well as its potential application to other similar contexts.

Summary

While the great recession (2007−2009) had a devastating effect on higher education (Clark, 2010), the challenges currently being experienced by higher education go back decades. These issues include cost of operating, a decline in enrollment, and the impact of technology on delivery and operations. Although some institutions have put in place counter-measures, many small-endowment, private institutions, continue to face obstacles that affect their operations. In

response to these challenges, partnerships are among some of the counter-measures being used by some institutions (Martin & Samels, 1994). Key to these counter-measures are leadership, organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, mission attainment. In the absence of effective leadership, well managed organizational change, and a clear purpose, success becomes hard to achieve, according to Burley et al., (2012).

In this chapter the researcher identified, and introduced current challenges facing higher education, the framework through which the researcher conducted this research, the importance of this study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, delimitations and limitations. The next chapter will cover the literature review, focusing and expanding more on the main conceptual framework, and sub-themes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This literature review will present applicable conceptual frameworks and sub-themes, which will mainly focus on leadership, as the main framework, with organizational change, and purpose as sub-themes. Purpose will include survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment.

Background

According to Hayes (2012), the last two decades have seen higher education go through many changes that have forever altered ways in which higher education institutions operate. Although many sectors of the economy, including higher education, were greatly impact by the last economic recession (2007−2009), the current challenges facing higher education institutions, especially economic challenges, date back to more than three decades ago according to Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport (2011). However, there are more than just economic challenges that higher education face today. According to Hayes (2012), additional challenges are political and technological in nature, which are both of national and international in scope. Staley, Dennis, and Trinkle (2011) noted that the combined effects of these challenges have been felt by higher education institutions in the form of an ongoing financial burden, with Supiano (2008) specifically highlighting small endowments, private, higher education institutions.

At the national level, many institutions face, or at risk of, facing an internal leadership crisis (Appadurai, 2009). In addition to leadership being a key internal component, other external factors—a declining number of students who are often considered college age, student debt, a focus on career ready programs, and the rapid advances in new technologies—have played a role in the recent troubles experienced by higher education institutions. Furthermore,

for-profit institutions, and international higher education institutions, have also proven to be additional competitors to private, non-profit higher education institutions in the United States. For Mondale (1982) these challenges can be classified under three categories, which include a great shift in demography, a social and cultural shift toward higher education, and the continuous technological changes. Part of this social and cultural change is partly a result of an improving job market.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2015) data points toward an improving workforce, which is luring students from classroom into labor. Since it peaked in 2011, enrollment has gone down for four straight years from late 2011 to 2015, with colleges losing over 1,000,000 students during this period of time. As a result, the headline is the same across the board, the vise around higher education institutions continues to tighten. Lindsay (2015) noted the continuous attack on higher education, and the questions around its relevance. The primary culprits behind these relevancy questions according to Medlin (2013) are higher levels of debt and lower prospect for jobs for graduates.

In response to high levels of scrutiny, higher education leaders have focused on cost, as well as figuring out ways to highlight, and elevate the relevancy of getting an education, especially in this current market (Medlin, 2013). Unfortunately, even with changes being implemented by most higher education institutions, Baldwin (2013) stated that many colleges still face serious problems, some of which threaten their very existence. This threat to existence is tied directly to the operating budget (Baldwin, 2013).

According to Oliff, Palacios, Johnson, and Leachman (2013), these challenges combined, seem to seriously, and negatively, affect higher education institutions' budgets. These issues reduce to budgetary concerns for many higher education institutions, which have seen increasing

cuts in the past decades—from both local and state governments—and these cuts are predicted to continue for the foreseeable future. Buckley and Du Toit (2010) stated that the natural reaction for funding cuts is to figure out alternative ways of raising funds by putting measures in place to try to cover the gaps. According to Oliff et al., (2013), cutting spending, raising tuition, or doing both, are some of the ways that these higher education institutions have responded. What made these measures similar across the board was because these challenges are no longer issues unique to specific institutions, but ones that affect institutions across the board, and have created a great level of uncertainties.

Hayes (2012) noted that uncertainties surrounding higher education institutions are not new, although what is new about them is in the fact that unlike in the past when they were unique to individual institutions, these issues currently cut across the board. According to Fain (2014), the challenges include a continued national decline in the number of enrolling students who are traditionally considered college age, the impact of technology on how services are offered, and the continued increases in tuition, the latter which has greatly affected student debt. A similar observation was made by Farrell (2005). Even though public institutions have been the most affected by these problems, because they are heavy dependents on government support for their budgets (Schmidt, 2001), both private not-for-profit and for-profit institutions have equally been affected. According to Supiano (2008), the impact is even greater for higher education institutions with small endowments.

However, as the economy improved, there was a renewed sense of returning economic stability, which resulted in some budget stability. The economic stability has always boded well for government dependents, higher education institutions, especially public institutions, which mostly depend on local and federal government for a big percentage of their budgets (Supiano,

2008). As public institutions become economically stable, they also become an additional competition that private institutions have to deal with (Selingo, 2013). Not only are private higher education institutions having to deal with a decrease, at the national level, of students who are traditionally referred to as "college age," they are also having to deal with unexpected, and constantly evolving changes triggered being by advancements that are taking place as a result of technological discoveries. In addition, the financial stability being observed at the public institutions level because of the economic recovery, is creating additional competition, according to Supiano (2008).

However, according to Bidwell (2015), some private higher education institutions have figured out ways to overcome the financial challenges brought forth by the last economic recession. At the same time, many others are still struggling to overcome these challenges. Those affected at the private level are mainly tuition dependent, and do not have large endowments. Despite their budgetary related constraints, and driven by a desire to stay in operation, administrators at private institutions have responded accordingly by putting in place certain measures to make sure they stay in operation. Bidwell (2013) noted that these measures included cuts to programs, the reduction in terms of staff, and at times an increase in scholarship offerings. Accordingly, even though these college administrators' instituted measures may have an immediate impact, increasing scholarship offerings while cutting programs and laying off staff remains a financially unsustainable strategy in the long run, especially for already struggling institutions. Lakomski (2001) suggested that higher education institutions will have to come up with different, sustainable strategies in order to adapt to these challenges, or go out of business quickly; a conclusion supported by Anderson and Carta-Falsa, (2002).

One area where most higher education critics have focused when it comes to how higher education is currently operating, and how it can improve, has been leadership (Lakomski, 2001). This particular leadership emphasis is a direct result of the role it plays when it comes to organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment—a combination of which have proven successful in helping higher education institutions overcome adversity (Lakomski, 2001).

Because of the key role leadership plays in terms of organizations overcoming current challenges, this literature review focused on leadership as a main conceptual framework. Furthermore, this review focused on two additional sub-themes: organizational change, which is the basis for Kurt Lewin's theory of organizational change, and purpose, which focused on survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment.

Conceptual Framework

According to Jabareen (2009), "a conceptual framework is a product of qualitative processes of theorization" (p. 1). Ravitch and Riggan (2012) defined a conceptual framework in terms of the importance of an argument about the topic being studied, why both the topic and the proposed means to conduct the study, as they relate to appropriateness and rigor matter. They further stated that an argument referred to "a series of sequenced, logical propositions, the purpose of which is to convince the reader of the study's importance and rigor" (p. 7). This present study had various frameworks, which consisted of leadership being the main framework, while organizational change and purpose, which focused on survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment, were sub-themes. This next section will cover each one of these frameworks in depth, starting with leadership.

Leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), "leadership is an act or instance of leading" (p. 15). In their words, the ability to guide and direct others—a group of people, an entire institution—are key traits of a good leader. Leadership is important because there are both major short and long-term implications associated with it, as it relates to the health of any given institution. Thus, Kouzes and Posner (1995) stated that without leadership, institutions would not exist, because institutions are made up of people. Fullan (2011) stated that people who make up institutions need leaders for guidance, effectively making leaders mentors, motivators, innovators, and role models. Through leaders, plans of action, organizational changes, mission statements and attainment, and visions are initiated, implemented, and supported (Fullan, 2011). Therefore, leaders' contributions to organizational change, performance, and ultimate success, make them invaluable contributors (Fullan, 2011).

Puzziferro (2012) went even further by emphasizing not just leadership, but effective leadership. He stated that without leaders who possess abilities to affect change by presenting an organizational vision, and setting sight on success, it is impossible for any institution to effectively operate, much less succeed. Al Sharija and Watters (2012) noted the crucial, important role that leadership plays in the current environment within which higher education is operating and navigating. According to Puzziferro (2012), "leadership has become even more critically ambiguous" (p. 2), given the noticeable struggles being faced by higher education institutions, which range from "changes in student demographics, constant technological changes, as well as new regulations that are challenging the very core of higher education philosophy" (p. 2).

Based on how diverse and complex these challenges appear to be, it is important that today's leader is multi-dimensional (Kouzes & Posner, 1995), innovative (Al Sharija & Watters,

2012), flexible (Shoop, 2009), and bold and adaptive (Wood, 1977). According to Fullan (2011), these mentioned leadership qualities are important and needed for any leader who seeks to successfully navigate the current complex higher education environment. Staley, Dennis, and Trinkle, (2011) metaphorically viewed the current operating environment as being "crossed with fault lines, whose fissures are creating potential areas of dramatic change, and is as seismic as it has been in decades" (p. 16).

Staley, Dennis, and Trinkle further noted that a style of leading that is not expansive enough in terms of qualities was "not good enough for anyone in a contemporary position of leadership" (p. 16). In addition to understanding changes in regulations and compliance, a leader today also has to stay current in terms of trends and technology. According to Fullan (2011), today's leaders in higher education have to possess motivating and collaborative skills. Unfortunately, as observed by Puzziferro (2012), there appears to be a strong focus currently on maintaining the status quo by leadership in higher education, which can be disastrous, because change has become constant in today's world, making the focus on maintaining the status quo, often know as traditional values of leadership, somehow out of place (Puzziferro, 2012). Puzzifero concluded that for a leader to have success in the current complex operating environment, he or she has to be willing to challenge the status quo—traditional norms of higher education—and "develop an ability to manage the juxtaposition of tradition against the backdrop of change" (p. 1). According to Fullan (2011), the ability of a leader to find this balance is a critical step toward success.

Leadership is key to both initiate change, and oversee the process of its complete implementation (Fullan, 2011). In addition to leadership being key in the process of change, leaders have to be driven and motivated themselves. As such, research showed that leaders at

various institutions are being driven by different forces in order to overcome challenges, sustain change, and achieve mission statements. While some leaders are being driven by the desire to see their institutions survive (Puzziferro, 2012), others are driven by sustainability, and still others are driven by the desire to achieve mission attainment (Fullan, 2011). Regardless of factors driving these leaders, Kouzes and Posner (1995) saw one constant in terms of leadership style: a combination of leadership styles, which according to them meant understanding multiple approaches to leadership. Although there are many leadership styles covered in the literature, servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership styles will be the ones covered in this study.

Servant leadership. According to Greenleaf (1977), "servant leadership is a philosophy and set of leadership practices that focus on shared power" (p. 1). He further stated that servant leadership was founded on the principle of putting the needs of followers first, while helping them develop and perform at their best. Therefore, serving other than leading is the first inclination of a servant leader, because servant leadership is founded on the principle of a leader being of service to his or her followers first and foremost, and then consciously choose to aspire to lead.

Although Greenleaf is credited with "bringing servant leadership into contemporary focus" (Irving, 2011, p. 119), there is evidence to show that servant leadership related practices "can be traced back to biblical roots in general and New Testament roots in particular" according to Irving (2011, p. 119). To help support his statement, Irving referred to a passage in the Bible in the book of John 13:1−20, where Jesus took time to wash his disciples' feet. Irving used this passage as one of the best examples of servant leadership.

According to Irving (2011), the experience of having their feet washed by Jesus Christ was both humbling and powerful because it had an impact on the disciples' (followers) perspectives, and understanding of what it meant to be a leader. Although this act by Jesus Christ was not mentioned or referenced by Greenleaf, it was still referenced as an example of servant leadership, in literature that focused more on Christianity. An argument can be made to say that this is why Yu (2007) implied that servant leadership may have been modeled on Christian leadership, as modeled by Jesus Christ. The same can be said about McCormick (1994) who noted the similarities that exist between Christian leadership traits, especially compassion, and how those show up in servant leadership.

Because of its particular emphasis and concern for followers, servant leadership draws its strength and success through a servant leader's abilities to personally and professionally transform others, and sustain this transformation (Irving, 2011). According to Shaw and Newton (2014), "the transformational power of the servant leader and the effect that he or she has on a group of employees and colleagues, to lift an organization from mediocrity to greatness is astounding" (p. 101). To illustrate this emphasis on concern for others, Kets de Vries (2014) used an example from Alexander the Great. He argued that the reason why Alexander the Great was able to command such great loyalty, and respect from his soldiers, as well as maintain high morale, was because Alexander led them from the front. According to Kets de Vries, Alexander the Great was not just a king in a palace barking orders, but a leader on the battlefront, suffering and fighting alongside his soldiers. What made him an excellent leader was his ability to lead his soldiers by example. Kets de Vries further stated that not only did he lead his troops from the front, he suffered alongside them by not receiving any special treatment that his troops were not receiving.

Although the above examples demonstrate the successes of leaders who used servant leadership as a style of leading, they say little about the components of servant leadership. According to Laub (1999), several distinct components make servant leadership a balanced style of leadership, and allows anyone using it to succeed in the 21st century. These distinct components mainly focus on followers. They include the ability of a leader not only to value, but to make sure followers are developing into potential leaders. They also include the ability of a leader to build a community, which allows for shared leadership responsibilities. Laub (1999) further stated that servant leadership allows the leader to display a level of authenticity not seen in other styles. Spears (2013), on the other hand, expanding on the work of Greenleaf, came up with 10 distinct traits, or characteristics, which included the ability of a leader "to be empathetic, authentic, with strong convictions, an active listener, foresight, creativity, stewardship, inquiry, and a sense of community" (p. 27).

Whereas traditional leaders within organizations have a tendency to see their followers as people to be used to achieve their purpose, and "consider workers as cogs in a machine" (Spears, 2013, p. 3), servant leadership view people differently. According to both Greenleaf (1977) and Hess (2013), a leader who uses servant leadership as a style often has a tendency of focusing on community building. To build a strong community, teamwork is foundational. And even more importantly, making subordinates be part of the decision-making process becomes crucial. Moreover, servant leadership tends to prioritize the enhancement of personal growth, because serving others partly means taking care of them. When followers feel cared for, there tends to be a domino effect in terms of the organization-wide impact and institutional success, because of the strong emphasis on collectiveness (Hess, 2013).

According to Pearce, Manz, and Sims (2009), the ability of a servant leader to build a sense of community creates a sense of a collective objective where followers' focus is not only on themselves, but on others in the form of helping them to lift each other up. This ability to lift each other up to achieve collective goals reveals that when servant leadership is practiced right, it may lead to an organization culture of trust and respect. This is accomplished through the willingness of team members to influence each other (Pearce et al., 2009). In addition, when such a culture exists within an organization, it allows for an easier improvement in terms of performance, according to Pearce et al., (2009).

Transformational leadership. Developed and introduced by Burns (1978), a leader who using transformational leadership as a type of leading, focuses on engaging with followers in a way that allows for personal and professional growth to occur simultaneously at the leader's and followers' level. Burns noted that "transformational leaders ascertain their followers' motives, and help fulfil their needs for self-actualization, by incorporating a holistic approach, which in turn transform subordinates into leaders themselves" (p. 20).

Expanding on Burns' work, Cox (2001) viewed transformational leaders in terms of change agents. According to him, transformational leadership facilitates, or influences both individual and system-wide change to take place. Moreover, Conger (1999) refers to the impact of transformational leadership in terms of creating growth value at the individual level, and making change, positive change can happen at the institutional level. The ultimate focus on a leader using transformational leadership as a style is being able to develop his or her followers into leaders themselves. The result of focusing on raising followers into leaders has been proven to impact both performance and staff morale, according to Conger (1999).

In addition to focusing on followers, there are other ways that a transformational leader can use to impact followers' growth. According to Bass (1990), followers have to feel and know they matter, and are able to identify with the mission they are given to carry forward, which creates a sense of identity. Furthermore, the ability to relate to mission creates a sense of community when enough of the followers feel a sense of ownership. Moreover, Bass stated that "challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance" (p. 21) was key to a transformational leader's success.

To summarize transformational leadership, Bass stated that it was "a model of integrity and fairness" (p. 22). He went on stating that a transformational leader was "someone who sets clear goals, has high expectations, and encourages others" (p. 22). In addition to the above stated quality reflected in this style of leading, a transformational leader has the ability to be supportive and appreciative, at the same time creating a sense of community where followers' self-interests are not centered, but a sense of the greatest good is what is centered. The ability to lead followers from focusing on the self and more on the collective requires a great level of influence.

According to Barbuto (2005), for a transformational leader to "model integrity, fairness, and inspire high expectations, he or she has to consider four key characteristics: charisma, vision, ability to inspire, and achievement" (p. 28). In addition, these key characteristics allow a transformational leader the ability to be trusted and admired by the followers. They further create a strong sense of loyalty and respect for the leader. Referring to these characteristics as components, Riggio (2009) summarized them into four components of transformational leadership, which Hughes (2014) called the Four I's. These four components are "Idealized

Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration" (p. 8).

According to Simic (1998), *Idealized Influence* focuses on a leader's ability to build followers' confidence and trust. The leader does this through his or her role modeling to followers. For Riggio, *Inspirational Motivation* entails more than a leader's capability to be charismatic, because while charisma focuses on individuals, inspirational motivation goes further and focuses on the entire organization. Kelly (2003) stated that inspiration motivation was about the bigger picture, encompassing entire organization culture, including the working environment.

Intellectual Stimulation focused more on follower's growth, and specifically on their abilities to not only recognize problems, but to also be able to independently solve them (Kelly, 2003). Focusing on "followers' intellectual stimulation" (Barbuto, 2005, p. 29), allows transformational leaders to put an extra emphasis on innovation and creativity when it comes to problem solving. Doing so allows leaders to help followers question their own assumptions and beliefs with a goal of getting them to think about problems differently, and in newer ways.

Individualized Consideration concentrated more on the inclusiveness of followers by the leader. It is more than simply taking care of followers' needs. According to Simic (1998), individualized consideration calls for transformational leaders to make sure that their followers "are included in the transformation process of the organization" (p. 52).

Furthermore, Simic stated that transformational leaders do not only transform institutions and organizations, they also transform their followers in the process through their "abilities to motivate and inspire their followers" (p. 53). The reasons behind motivation are to help followers "achieve at the highest level" (p. 53), making sure their leadership potentials are equally developed in the process. According to Schoemaker (2013), one of the qualities of

transformational leaders is their ability to create a sense of satisfaction and loyalty in their followers. To demonstrate what he meant, he used the example of the late, former South African president, Nelson Mandela.

> One of Mandela's greatest legacies is starting the national healing process from the moment he was released. An exceptional symbolic act in this regard was his visit to Betsie Verwoerd, the wife of the 'architect of apartheid,' who was assassinated later in his life. Not only did Mandela visit Betsie Verwoerd, he was willing to do so at her home in Orania. This was an Afrikaner homeland and a striking anachronistic symbol of racial separation. Mrs. Verwoerd chose to live there as a widow after apartheid had been abolished. Mandela's recurring emphasis on mutual forgiveness was truly remarkable. In 1993, after his recent released from 27 years in prison, he said: 'I am working now with the same people who threw me into jail, persecuted my wife, hounded my children from one school to the other. . . and I am one of those who are saying: let us forget the past, and think of the present.' Later, in a 2000 interview with the Christian Science Monitor, Mandela reiterated the same message: 'for all people who have found themselves in the position of being in jail and trying to transform society, forgiveness is natural because you have no time to be retaliative. (p. 1)'

The message being conveyed by the example above is influence through action. According to Bennett (n.d), transformational leaders have the ability to lead by example, and often through action. The above example is one of many where transformational leaders are part of everyday life, and when saying leaders, this should not only imply those who hold certain positions in major institutions, organizations, and businesses (Bennett, n.d.). Bennett used parents as an example of transformational leadership. What makes parents transformational

leaders according to him, are the natural duties they have to perform related to parenting—guiding their children into becoming productive members of society. Moreover, what makes parents transformational leaders derives from the levels of influence they hold over their children, in terms of how they model for their children what it means to become a fully productive member of society. However, it is not only parents, as faith leaders, advocates, coaches, mentors, and teachers can be considered transformational leaders.

Business leadership. Hawkins (2009) quoted Peter Drucker, whose work has been foundational, and has had a great impact on modern day business practices. Hawkins defined business leadership both in terms of resources and operations (Kantrow, 2009). For resources, Hawkins focused on management, and zoomed in on the morality and ethics behind operations. Hawkins noted that there are guiding principles that are fundamental to a business succeed in the current operating environment. As such, outcomes are extremely important, because they are key indicators tied to these principles, which include a leader's ability to have a vision, communicate effectively, lead by example, and balance the focus on both staff and clients. According to Hawkins (2009), the combined principles showcase the significance of the outcomes as a focal point for this style of leading. Therefore, the best way to understand business leadership is through an understanding of its guiding principles.

Vision. According to Lavinsky (2013), business leadership requires a visionary leader who does not only envision the future, but is able to devise a plan of action accordingly. To conceive a vision and create an effective plan of action to achieve it requires discipline and creativity, especially when a leader's vision encompasses more than just the leader, and the success of a vision depends on how an entire organization buys into it (Collins & Porras, 1996). Therefore, a business leader is an inspirer who gets everyone within an organization involved in

the change process, and to share responsibility when it comes to achieving organizational vision and goals, according to Collins and Porras (1996).

Having a vision alone is not enough, because to be successful, a leader has to inspire his or her vision through purposeful and effective communication. The late Steve Jobs, former Apple's founder and CEO, has been credited with excellence in terms of purposeful and effective communication (Ivic & Green, 2012). If a leader does not get followers who are supposed to effectively lead the process of organizational changes, or be excited about the vision, then the vision becomes just another idea, according to Collins and Porras (1996).

Communication. According to Lavinsky (2013), communication is a significant part of effective leadership. Therefore, any leader who wishes to be great and successful has to be a great communicator. Having a vision alone is not enough, because while the leader may have the ability to envision a portrait of the future, the success of such envisioning depends greatly on the ability of a leader to communicate the vision to followers. Moreover, to inspire them enough to not only embrace the vision, but to also help drive the vision forward to its effective execution. In the absence of effective communication, gaining followers' trust and support becomes hard (Lavinsky, 2013).

According to Squeo (2013), effective communication in any industry, and any other part of society, is an invaluable skill for any leader to have. Before a leader can lead, he or she has to know where and how to lead. A good leader understands where and how to effectively create a high level of trust, because when followers know the leader is confident in the destination, they easily follow the leader who can get them to the destination successfully (Squeo, 2013). In addition, for a leader to successfully and effectively communicate, he or she is required to be purposeful, practical, and persistent (Lavinsky, 2013).

Role model. It is the ability to lead and serve others by example that makes a leader a role model. According to Lavinsky (2013), leaders who are seen as good role models by followers who aspire to walk in their footsteps, focus on more than just how they carry and present themselves. They have to focus on how they encourage cooperation and teamwork (Lavinsky, 2013). Additionally, they have to make sure the focus is on their followers' professional growth and development. They do this in part by recognizing achievements in a tangible way, which often reinforces positivity (Lavinsky, 2013). Consequently, the display of such a leader is used as the best way to predict performance. Hence, by reinforcing positivity through tangible actions, a leader is often sending a message to his or her followers that simultaneously highlights excellence (Armour & Duncombe, 2012).

Client focused. Prive (2012) stated that a client-focused leader does not only have a full understanding of their organization's operational structures, they also understand their clients' needs. Prive (2012) further stated that it is much harder to lead and satisfy clients' needs, if there is lack of familiarity with those needs. Accordingly, when leaders are aware of their clients' needs, they have a better chance to succeed, because strategies and plans of action are more often a result of observed needs, wants, and/or concerns. By addressing them, a leader is often creating a healthy and successful organization (Prive, 2012).

Employee focused. To be an employee-focused leader entails both creating a sense of trust and great care toward staff. According to Prime and Salib (2014), the ability of a leader to project a sense of inclusiveness automatically creates high levels of involvement from employees, which more often leads to the generation of new ideas and ways of proceeding. There are many studies showing that when employees are motivated, they are more likely to be more productive, going above and beyond the explicit requirements of their positions, according

to Lipman (2014). Once again, this speaks to the inclusive environment within which work takes place, where employees take ownership and feel cared for by the leader.

Situational leadership. As stated by Blanchard (1987), Paul Hersey developed situational leadership as a style of leading in the late 1960s. Blanchard further stated that situational leadership is a style of leading which is circumstantial because a leader using this style has to be adaptive to different circumstances. Hersey (1979) saw situational leadership as a style that encourages leaders to be flexible in executing tasks. A leader who uses this style of leading must adjust to meet followers' professional and developmental levels in order to better serve them. According to Blanchard (1987), to be effective, a leader and not a follower, has to adapt his or her style. In other words, situational leadership is a style of leading that is centered around a leader's ability to change, adapt, and evolve depending on circumstances (Hersey, 1979).

Based on the principles of situational leadership, no single leadership style is effective without incorporating some aspects of the other styles. Therefore, anyone who professes to practice situational leadership should know how to effectively incorporate other aspects of different styles of leadership depending on situations or challenges they encounter (Hersey, 1979). Blanchard (1987) stated that a successful leader who practices situational leadership has the ability to maintain consistency regardless of how complex a challenge may be; a point supported by Hersey (1979). However, given how hard it often is to master adaptability as a skill, because mastering it requires a leader to develop a better understanding of different aspects of life and situations (Blanchard, 1987), many leaders and organizations often chose to maintain status quo (Boss, 2015). Unfortunately, in a fast-changing operating environment, maintaining

the status quo often lead to failures and falling behind. Therefore, to avoid the risk of falling behind, situational leaders must have a strong ability to adapt (Boss, 2015).

According to Mayo (2007), adaptive capacity speaks to a leader's readiness to excel in multiple situations. He elaborated further by stating that a leader using situational leadership as a style, has to possess the capacity, and ability to adapt his or her leadership style(s), in order to fit evolving needs within the organization they lead. These needs can be conditional, contextual, and/or cultural. This ability to adapt is important, especially in this century where constant change has now become the norm (Boss, 2015). This new norm, which is here to stay, requires leaders to be attentive and keep up with change, especially in an operating environment that continues to see frequent change, thus underlining the importance of situational leadership (Boss, 2015; Mayo, 2007).

According to Boss (2015), adaptability does not simply apply to an operating environment. The ability of a leader to adapt applies to his or her relationship with followers, because depending on concentration areas and specializations within the workforces, leaders have to work with different personnel. In other words, in an institution where there are many areas of specialization, there are equally many types of people with different approaches, making situational leadership necessary to be successful. In relation to their followers, situational leadership allows a leader the flexibility and adaptability in terms of discerning areas that necessitate extra emphasis, and adapting accordingly (Blanchard, 1987). According to Mayo (2007), situational leadership enables leaders to effectively prioritize in order to achieve success, and accomplish tasks. To better understand situational leadership, it is important to comprehend its contextual factors.

Cherry (n.d.) noted that there is a lens of four contextual factors by which situational leadership can be characterized. The importance of considering these factors—relationship, task at hand, level of authority, and level of maturity—for any leader who professes to practice situational leadership, especially when assessing urgent matters that may arise and require immediate attention, is that these factors simplify the decision-making process.

Relationship. According Walter (1980), the ability of a leader to establish a good working relationship with his or her followers is the difference between individual follower's success and failure, as well as organization success or failure. Walter further stated that relationships are key, because they have an impact on the ability of individuals to be productive and satisfied. However, the decision in terms of which factors and what role they play in the decision-making process rests with the leader who has to discern the why, when, what, and how in order to make an informed decision (Cherry, n.d).

Task. According to Prive (2012), prior to any decisions being made, it is important that the leader who is making the decision consider the reason why such a decision is being made. In this case, it is important a leader considers the task, which may be simple or complex, at hand. Moreover, considering the task alone is not enough, a leader has to be fully aware of what the task entails, because such knowledge is what can enable them to determine the right measures needed for the accomplishment of a given task.

Authority. Sometimes leadership comes authority, because leadership often entails a position of power. A leader should therefore be aware and considerate of the power that the position he or she holds carries. It is important to differentiate between a leader and a manager (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010). According to Zaleznik (2004), the difference comes down to influence, because followers look up to a leader while subordinates answer to a manager.

Moreover, while managers' power often derived from positions they occupy, leaders' powers are always based on influence, because they tend to build others into leaders, thus the circles of influence for leaders, and circles of power for managers (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010). Furthermore, Reynolds and Warfield stated that "most management positions come with pre-determined powers associated with them, such as the capacity to fire, hire, reward, or reprimand subordinates" (p. 64). Leaders on the other hand "gain power through gained respect from group members" (p. 64). Gaining respect results from relationships built through a leader's ability to be supportive and inclusive, especially in the decision-making process (Cherry, n.d).

Level of maturity. According to Hersey and Blanchard (1969), it is in the best interest of a leader to consider the level of followers' professional maturity, especially for an inclusive leader who desires to involve followers in decision-making and especially in situations that requires immediate attention. Professional maturity is a good measure of deciding whether or not a willing follower has the capacity to bring value to the decision-making process, especially one that requires urgency, because involving someone who lacks professional maturity to the decision-making table may lead to failure (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

Situational leadership is built around the belief that no single style of leading is best, because effectiveness in leadership often depend on task-relevancy and orientation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). They further stated that goals, objectives, and intended results are important to consider, especially when it comes to comparing and selecting best approaches when making decisions. This is because unlike a monostyle approach to leadership, which more often than not relies on pre-determined approaches, situational leadership as an approach relies heavily on using a given situation to determine the right approaches. The reliance on "appropriate assessment of circumstances, makes situational leadership much more sufficient to address the

dynamic, multi-dimensional, and complex nature of social organizations, and the actors within them" (Nevarez, Wood, & Penrose, 2013, p. 3).

Servant and transformational leadership combination. Given that both servant and transformational leadership style of leading have their own strengths, and are effective on their own merit, Basham (2012) suggested a combination of some aspects of both styles. According to him, they combine for effectiveness and success. The success of leaders who combine some aspects of each style comes from their abilities to care for their subordinates, as well as being exemplary visionaries, and influential role models. According to Basham (2012), both styles of leading provide any leader practicing them the ability to generate trust from those he or she leads. According Armour and Duncombe (2012), leaders who combine these two styles have effectively assigned their followers responsibility. In addition, these styles facilitate the ability of a leader to communicate effectively (Lavinsky, 2013) and influence and empower those around them (Barbuto, 2005; Simic, 1998). Although both styles have their differences—while transformational leadership tends to be primarily goals and objectives oriented (Burns, 1978), servant leadership primary focus tends to be on individuals' well-being (Greenleaf, 1977)—they are complementary to each other, and both describe excellent forms of leadership (Basham, 2012).

Summary. As survivability is the driving force for some institutions (Puzziferro, 2012), while sustainability, or mission attainment drive other institutions, the best way for higher education institutions to overcome current challenges, and sustain change is to not only have effective leadership in place, but leaders who have diverse leadership styles (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Leadership is key to success in any industry including higher education, especially during

these challenging times of constant change. This section reviewed several leadership styles including, servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership.

According to Greenleaf (1977), a leader who practices servant leadership, is viewed as a servant first and a leader next. The focal point of servant leadership is the ability of a leader to help others—those they serve—develop their skills, and become better leaders themselves (Dambe & Moorad, 2008). Therefore, a servant leader primarily focuses more on his /her followers' success and less on his or her personal achievements (Fullan, 2011). This ability to serve others' needs first is crucial, especially in the field education, because for a student-centered field, it is important that teachers prioritize students (Christensen & Horn, 2008).

Kittaneh (2015) stated that in business leadership success comes from the ability to primarily lead, and also being a game-changer, specifically in terms of bringing in exceptional talents, as well as the ability to generate different, new ideas. According to him, successful business leaders are "simultaneously calculated, clever, collaborative, composed, confident, and creative" (p. 1). These traits give business leaders the necessary tools they need in order to respond to business related challenges, and eventually overcome them (Lipman, 2014). In addition, leaders who use business leadership, and follow these guiding principles, are successful in establishing and achieving short and long-term goals (Kittaneh, 2015, p. 1).

Transformational leadership was defined and viewed through the lenses of a leader's ability to be visionary, be a change agent, as well as being an effective facilitator. Therefore, transformational leadership is a style of leading that can also be referred to as change leadership.

What makes situational leadership important is its ability to allow a leader time to assess various situations, and consider different solutions depending on the circumstance and urgency. Moreover, as they assess and consider solutions, they keep in mind intended results, which

inform them in terms of selecting best circumstance-based approaches (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). The next section will introduce organizational change.

Organizational change. For every organization, change is a constant happening that takes place at various times in the course of its existence. These changes are often referred to as organizational changes. According to Ahmed et al., (2014), these changes take place at various levels of an organization. Some happen at the organization structure, others in terms of technology, others affect an organization culture, and others impact an organization's operations. They referred to organizational change, as a process through which a new state of being is achieved. However, reaching a new state of being requires the guidance of a change agent, according to Baldridge (1970). A change agent is a visionary who is needed because for a new state being to be reached, new strategies are required, making them "essential to any institution's survival" (Van de Ven, 1986, p. 593). This section will introduce organizational change, levels of change, and briefly introduce consortia, which is often a result of change.

According to Haveman et al., (2001), organizational change can be triggered by many factors, including changes in the market place. These changes may lead some organizations to respond accordingly, while others may choose to react to them. Organizations that wait for change to happen in the market place, and then respond or react, are considered passive, which is contrary to proactive organizations. A progressive leader who triggers change (Haveman et al., 2001), often leads organizations that view organizational change proactively.

Depending on where an organization is in terms of its operations, change can be a constant, or something that happens periodically. Given how constantly shifting the operating environment is in many industries currently (Ahmed et al., 2014), change has been constant. As technology continues to affect aspects of everyday life, the ability for organizations to constantly

evolve has become normal. Therefore, in the view of this constant shift in the market through which these organizations operate, any organization that tries to avoid change and keep the status quo, when other organizations embark of adjusting and adapting, and continuously reinvent themselves, is a threat to its own existence (Corrigan, n.d.).

Considering the current climate of constant transformation—culture, economies, education, technologies, workforce, best practices, and changing priorities, both socially and politically—it is imperative that organizations understand that change has become an increasing priority that will be around for the foreseeable future (Haveman et al., 2001). According to Levine (2014), there is no way around this current climate of constant metamorphosis. Whether or not they are prepared for it, higher education institutions will undergo some form of disruptive adjustment. It is therefore up to leaders at these institutions to either choose to lead change, or become its victim (Levine, 2014).

Given that many organizations are constantly adjusting and adapting, change has become part of how they do business on a regular basis (Burnes, 2004). Although many organizations appear to have embraced change, they continue to see challenges associated with a process that is often complicated (Levine, 2014). Kaufman (1995) noted that change requires time, and as such, during the process of making change happen, there is often a high level of resistance. According to Weick (1977), "any changes taking place in higher education, is often obstructed by the present" (p. 44). The perception around higher education organizations is that they are "anarchic federations of loosely coupled parts" (p. 44). Moreover, they are also seen as "autonomy-seeking agents, working under formidable constraints, uncertain goals, and using unclear technologies" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 78).

Although it is a well-known fact, according to Burnes (2004) that the desire of higher education leaders is to advance the notion that change is inevitable, evidence points toward a high level of reluctance and resistance from colleges and universities (Kaufman, 1995). According to Kezar (2009), change is a recurring struggle for campuses, because there are many stakeholders including administrators, students, and boards, all of whom have the desire to see change happen in various levels of higher education institutions (Kezar, 2009). Kezar further noted that there is a real challenge around change for higher education institutions, as a result of the resistance mainly from staff and faculty, but in other cases from administrators as well. Because of the inclination to maintain the status quo, fear of not knowing what change would bring, especially around academic freedom, and the connection between different departments within an institution, there is often a noticeable slowness to adjust to change and innovation.

According to Meyer, Hecht, Gill, and Toplonytsky (2010), refocusing staff around what organizational change means, as well as highlighting the process, which is made of many steps toward desired goals, is one of several ways to help reduce the fear associated with change and thereby minimizing the inclination to resist from staff, faculty and administrators. As stated by Burnes (2004), change at the organizational level is not an instant happening, but a process that takes time and involves many steps.

Whether or not an organization achieves success during the stages of change does not depend on simply going through these stages of change, because there is a crucial management aspect of making sure that change happens effectively and efficiently. There are also many factors involved in the process including the people involved, and the type of change (Meyer et al., 2010). Of the above mentioned, people who drive change, play an important role, making them invaluable to the process of organizational transformation. This is because whether or not

change at the organizational level is successful depends on how much people are willing to embrace it, and get involved, according to Burnes (2004). According to Stavrou-Costea (2005), the ability to manage human resources plays an important role in terms of ways in which change is implemented.

Theories related to organizational change have continued to be developed by many experts in the field. And although many theories have emerged, one constant remains true: the most referenced theory today is Kurt Lewin's theory of organizational change. According to Burnes (2004), Lewin's theory of organization change centers around the realization that change is not stagnant or still, but constant. And because of how continuous change is, organizations have to be ready to adjust accordingly in order to achieve their desired status of being, which often becomes the new solidified norm. Since Kurt Lewin, there have been many theories of organizational change, notably Kotter's (1996) *8-step model of change,* and Hiatt (2006) *ADKAR change management model*. However, since most current theories of organizational change seem to build on Kurt Lewin's original work, his theory of organizational change will be used as a basis for this study.

To illustrate his theory, Lewin used a block of ice to make an analogy. He did this to illustrate the stages through which change takes place at an organizational level, which he deemed not complex (Lewin, 1946). For Lewin, a block of ice shaped one way cannot change into a different shape without having gone through a melting process, which makes it susceptible to change. He called this first stage the unfreeze stage. After melting it, the melted water has to be molded into a desired, different shape. This molding process into a new form is what Lewin called the change stage. Once molded into a new desired shape, the next stage is to solidify this

new state of being, which Lewin referred to as the refreeze stage (Burnes, 2004). This next section will focus on each one of these steps in details.

Unfreeze stage. This stage is the first step in the process of change. In terms of organizational change, this stage involves taking necessary steps to prepare an organization for the coming change. This step can be compared to Kotter's (1996) stage one, which is to increase urgency, and prepare the team for change. Hiatt (2006) referred to this stage as the awareness stage, in which organization members are prepared for eventual change. The unfreeze stage focuses on revising existing organizational norms, culture, and ways of operating. This stage is the destabilizing stage, according to Burnes (2004). With the knowledge that there is much instability that this stage creates, which naturally causes people to resist change according to Moore (2014), it is important that change agents concentrate on creating change awareness, and more specifically providing reason(s) why the change taking place is necessary, a point supported by Hiatt (2006). Hiatt went further than simply providing the reasons why, and encouraged change agents to focus on the challenges and barriers created by the status quo, and how those may be hindering growth. This stage does not take exception of anyone, as every single organization aspect is up for examination, in order to make a strong case as to why change is necessary for an organization to remain viable (Kotter, 1996).

For change agents to better prepare an organization for the coming changes, Usher (2009) suggested starting at an organization's very core. An examination should start by reviewing current organizational values, beliefs, attitudes, practices, and behaviors (Burnes, 2004). It is important to note that doing such examination has proven a challenging task, because when change agents begin revising processes that are in place, there is always disequilibrium that takes

place throughout the organization, according to Usher (2009). This sense of being off balance often result in those being affected by change reacting strongly (Burnes, 2004).

Both Hiatt (2006) and Usher (2009), appear to agree that given the instability created by the process of organizational change, which often seems a forced process, especially when it comes to an organization examining its core, it is crucial that change agents make sure they effectively create a control crisis. The goal of creating a control crisis—re-examining policies and procedures—is to allow change agents space to bring together, as part of the process, individuals who will be affected by change. By doing so, leaders are able to motivate, and encourage them to created different ways of proceeding, leading up to a new equilibrium (Usher, 2009). Without change agents' ability to motivate their subordinates, affecting any meaningful change becomes almost impossible, because those who are mostly affected by change, as well as affect it, have to be onboard (Usher, 2009).

In order to assure the participation of those being affected by change, communication, according to Hiatt (2006), is key during the unfreeze stage. It is during this stage that communication about the imminent change, its necessity, organizational impacts, and their importance are communicated (Hiatt, 2006). Furthermore, Hiatt noted that communication becomes key to counter disequilibrium during this stage. The goal, and hope of effective communication during this stage is to have more people aware of the coming changes, and show them why change is necessary. Usher (2009) said that the more they may embrace change, the more motivated and accepting of it they become. After the unfreeze stage comes the change stage.

Change stage. According to Lewin (1946), this stage is the resolution stage, because it is during this stage that solutions to uncertainties come together. Hiatt (2006) called this stage the

knowledge stage, because the details about change, which include new tasks, processes, systems, new roles and responsibilities, are clarified, and necessary trainings begin to take place. Kotter (1996) saw this as a stage during which organizations are getting their vision correct, and getting things moving. Moreover, it is during this stage that policies and procedures are changed, created, implemented, and mechanisms to support new directions become clear (Burnes, 2004). Since old ways of proceeding are unfrozen during this stage, all those involved in the process of change assimilate into this new state of existence (Kotter, 1996). According to Lewin (1946), this stage is a midpoint between existing state of being and desired new direction. For Burnes (2004), it is during this stage that the desired change start to be implemented.

Although the first stage appears to be the most difficult (Usher, 2009), this second stage is even more so, because it requires giving up on former ways, and embracing newer ways of operating. According to Kotter (1996), the time required for those affected by change to settle, and feel comfortable within their new settings, and ways of proceeding, is what makes this stage even more difficult to get through. Burnes (2004) noted that the struggles observed during this stage is due to people's perceptions on what they may see as unfamiliar, new realities. In addition to perceptions, there is also fear and uncertainties (Hiatt, 2006) around these new realities, as people wonder about what may go wrong, effectively making this stage the hardest to overcome (Burnes, 2004).

Hence, Kotter's (1996) strong insistence on communication beginning at stage one, because the more people are continually informed, the newer ways of proceeding become less intimidating. Therefore, according to Hiatt (2006), successful change agents primarily focus on preparing those most affected by change, making the process of change one that needs careful planning in order for a successful execution. In addition, it is a process that requires continued

communication and support for those being affected (Burnes, 2004; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 1996). Once change has been put in place, the next stage is to refreeze the new norms.

Refreeze stage. Lewin (1946) initially called this stage the freezing stage, because this stage entails the solidification of newer ways of proceeding after an often complex process of reinforcement and stability, according to Burnes (2004). Hiatt (2006) called this stage the reinforcement stage, because it requires a lot of persistence, according to Kotter (1996). Once this stage has been fully implemented and embraced, it is then reinforced and made part of the working culture (Kotter, 1996). Burnes (2004) noted the importance of the refreeze stage by saying that it was the only way to discourage both change agents and subordinates, not to return to former ways of operating. In order to make sure that newer ways of working are fully adapted, Hiatt (2006) remarked that many efforts have to be put in place, including acknowledgement and appreciation in terms of rewards toward exemplary individuals who have embraced and are spearheading changes. These efforts are crucial in terms of cementing the newer ways into an organization's culture (McLeod, 2007). The successful implementation depends on the ability of change agents to reinforce positive behaviors, which research shows if rewarded, positive behaviors are most likely to be repeated (McLeod, 2007).

However, Burnes (2004) cautioned that it may not be in the best interest of an organization to create a new sense of stability after going through change, especially in this ever-changing environment of operating, because things are constantly changing, and organizations have to quickly, and continually adapt. It is for the same reason why the refreezing stage is often seen as outdated, because the current rate of change suggests that there is never enough time to refreeze, as newer ways of operating that have been put in place may need to be re-evaluated as soon as they have been applied. Nevertheless, to prevent any attempt at going back to the status

quo in terms of former ways of working, or remain stuck in the change stage (Burnes, 2004), the refreeze stage, though it may be short in some instances, remains necessary, according to McLeod (2007).

Without the new frozen state, it becomes hard for change agents to effectively lead any more organizational changes, especially when those most affected by change may still be reeling from previous changes that may still be settling in. Although change is necessary and inevitable, there should be a purpose behind change. Lewin (1946) referred to this purpose as the strategic implementation of change. This strategic implementation refers to change as a relation of events in time, and an outcome of intentional acts (Burnes, 2004). Thus, change agents' success in terms of achieving change depend on two crucial factors: communication (Kotter, 1996) and time (Gesme, & Wiseman, 2010). For a better understanding and embracing of change by those affected by it, time is of essence. In addition to time, constant communication is equally crucial in terms of creating connections, especially during a transition period when things may appear to be of balance (Kotter, 1996).

Even though Lewin's theory of organizational change may suggest that change is a journey, Burnes (2004) cautioned against seeing change as a process that starts somewhere, has a pause somewhere in the middle of the process, and a predictive end. Although change remains a process, which may provide different intervals of pauses in terms of re-evaluating stages of change, as well as some time to cement new processes, an end to change does not exist (Burnes, 2004). In the end, what Lewin (1946), Kotter (1996), and Hiatt (2006) theories of organizational change revealed, is that organizational change affects institutions at various levels and stages. Accordingly, this next section will review levels of organizational change.

Levels of organizational change. According to Haveman et al., (2001), organizational change describes actions taken by an organization, often with a goal to improve quality and efficiency. Organizational change has levels of change through which implementation takes place. The last decade has seen many changes take place at the higher education institution level. Many have changed processes, others have restructures their models, mergers have taken place, as well as acquisitions, all of which have singlehandedly or combined to impact those affected by changes in various ways (Weissmann, 2013). In as much as external factors have, and will continue to impact higher education institutions, whether regulations or competition, there are also internal factors that have and will influence when, how, and whether or not they stay viably competitive. Thus, any organization wanting to stay competitive will have to adapt quickly. A quick adaptation entails the continued evaluations and implementation of change whenever necessary. Understanding the major levels of organizational change, which include people both as individuals and as a group, as well as organizational structure, is important to understand the overall impact of change at the organizational level.

Organizational level change. The impact of change at this level is both seen at the individual and group levels within an organization. Although every staff is viewed as a change agent in some capacity, levels of decisions differ, and as such, senior level management, according to Marcia, Blenko, Mankins and Rogers (2010), mostly lead change. Considering the impact of change on many aspects of an organization, it is important for change agents to understand the importance of the amount of time change requires in terms of planning prior to implementing (Dawson, 1994). There are many levels of organizational changes. These include strategic changes (Wong, 2005), structural changes (Ingram, n.d.), procedural changes (Willaert,

Van den Bergh, Willems, & Deschoolmeester, (2007)), and people changes (Ward & Warner, 1996).

Strategic change. This level of change focuses on restructuring key aspects of an organization starting with mission, culture, policy, and overall structure. The goal of this focus on an organization core being to eventually reach a desired objective (Wong, 2005). Although organizations have many reasons why they focus on strategic changes, the most obvious and primary reason, according to Wong (2005), is to make sure that an organization is achieving some type of a competitive advantage.

Structural change. Ingram (n.d.) noted that an organization structure is made of managerial hierarchies, which are an integral part of how well an organization functions. Because of the key role it plays in terms of shaping both an organization's internal and external values, and ways of operating, an organization structure is the foundation from which policies that guide an organization spring (Unterman & Davis, 1984). Therefore, structural change may entail focusing on an organization hierarchy in terms of leadership and management, which may be necessary to helping an organization adjust how it operates, based on industry-wide changes, or to remain viably competitive (Wong, 2005).

Process oriented change. Change at the process level entails putting an extra emphasis on current business practices. According to Willaert et al. (2007) an organization's ability to provide quality service, and be efficient is at the core of its success. Both quality and efficiency are foundational to organization key processes, which are part of what make an organization competitive. Given the current level of competition being faced by organizations, especially in a constantly shifting environment, because of technological advances, having solid processes appears the best and appropriate way to respond to these challenges. In brief, a better

understanding of these processes allows for an organization to be flexible as far as adapting to challenges is concerned, and it equally means greater organizational agility (Willaert et al., 2007).

People oriented change. According to Ward and Warner (1996), this type of change directly affects people. They clarified further by naming performance, relationships, connection to organization culture, and loyalty. Moreover, there is self-actualization that takes place when it comes to this level of change, which means unless the process of change involves those affected, it is doomed to fail (Ward & Warner, 1996). Harshak, Aguirre, and Brown (2010) noted that the way change has always been implemented historically, has not been with the participation of those most affected, and has mostly excluded them. The result of this exclusion by those most affected has been additional avoidable challenges that organizations have had to deal with. Therefore, according to Harshak et al., (2010), there is now greater understanding at the most organizations that for change to be successfully implemented, closer interactions with those who are primarily impacted have to be intentional. Without people, organizations do not exist, which means that an extra emphasis on this level of change is necessary, because an organization is affected by the impact that change has on the people that are part of an organization (Harshak et al., 2010).

Group level change. This level of change can be best understood through the lenses of teams (Lucas & Kline, 2008). Teams of individuals make up groups making it important to understand that teams are not groups, but rather a subset of groups (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Because teams of individuals make up groups, group level changes affect teams in terms of processes and systems in place. The reason, according to Lucas and Kline (2008), is because

groups often interact through norms they develop. Therefore, when group dynamics are severely affected, there is often new dynamics that emerge as a result, which often impact group interactions, how they communicate, and ultimately how a group operates (Lucas & Kline, 2008). Hence, as change agents work through change, it is highly advised they consider group cohesion, because change tends to strongly affect groups. Specifically, when a group is impacted, individual work within the group is affected, which also alters organization systems, including communication (Lucas & Kline, 2008).

Individual level change. Whelan-Berry, Gordon, and Hinings (2003) stated that change agents' ability to successfully implement change depends on how forthcoming individuals within an organization are to adapt to new norms and routines. They further emphasized the importance of making sure that those being affected by change are part of the process from the beginning—either by being willing or being incentivized to participate. Unfortunately, according to Bercovitz (2007), even with this knowledge, change agents more often than not, tend to underestimate the impact of new ways of doing things at the individual level.

This underestimation by change agents, which is often a result of assumption, is not correct, according to Schwartz (2013). He based his statement by reviewing roles played by individuals in the process of change, which was found to be invaluable. Schwartz (2013) noted that individuals who make them, influence groups within organizations. However, individuals influence is not only felt at group levels, but often translate into organization-wide impact (Mallinger, Goodwin, & O'hara, 2009). Thus, as change agents consider group changes, individuals that make up groups should never be considered in isolation, because when there is an impact, it is often beyond the individual or group (Bercovitz, 2007). Therefore, according to Hanson (1973), talking about organizational change without considering individuals—both

change agents and those most affected by change—would be counter-productive. The next section will briefly cover the role that leadership plays when it comes to the process of change.

Role of leadership in organizational change. According to Hanson (1973), a leader's competency and ability to influence change are key to his or her success when it comes to managing the process of implementing organizational change. There has been clear evolution as far as a change agent's role is concerned, as a result of advances in technologies, changing priorities, and also an evolving marketplace (Ahmed et al., 2014). These changes have forced continued reassessment and re-evaluation of operational processes by organizations, because they have to implement new ways of conducting business in response to shifting trends (Corrigan, n.d.). According to Kaufman (1995), change agents in leadership positions have to be well-developed and informed, to better affect change from initiation to implementation, because the process involves expected challenges and resistance to change.

Resistance is often as result of internal culture that may not accept change (Nohria & Beer, 2000). Furthermore, internal culture may empower those most affected by change to resist because of their unreadiness to adapt to newer ways, effectively making resistance a preferred way out, according to Kaufman (1995). Beside internal culture, change may be resisted because of lack of proper planning, or poor execution, or even less compelling reasons why change is taking place (Nohria & Beer, 2000). In addition, it is important to consider timing and resources required to effectively achieve change. However, the greatest threat to making change happen, according to Quast (2012), is none of the above mentioned, but change agents themselves. A change agent's inability to manage change or implement it can make any attempt worse, leading to a situation where inaction appear a better option (Quast, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial that whoever oversees the process of change is a seasoned leader. According to a study by Gilley,

Gilley, & McMillan (2009a), successful change agents communicate often, incentivize the process, and focus on coaching their followers, and building effectively strong teams. These behaviors will be covered in detail next.

Frequent and effective communication. Constant communication in the form of providing frequent and relevant updates about change, is key to a leader's success in implementing change, because effective communication allows a change agent to better prepare those most likely to be impacted by change, by letting them know ways in which they will be affected (Gilley et al., 2009a). According to Quast (2012), inconsistent and uncertain communication only produces doubt, which often leads to resistance. And when there is uncertainty around a leader and his or her ability to affect change in a consistent and effective way, then the leader's credibility is weakened. Therefore, it is crucial that a leader stays realistically consistent in his or her messaging (Gilley et al., 2009a).

Employee motivation. Successful change and the environment within which it takes place matters, because those affected by change have to work in an environment they see as favorable, where the focus for everyone is toward common goals (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009). In order to create this level of focus and commitment, especially while change is taking place, effective communication becomes crucial, because leaders who are also change agents, are able to address arising questions, encourage people to stay creative, and be supportive in terms of motivation (Gilley et al., 2009). Gilley et al., further stated that the goal is to make sure even during such a crucial, and challenging period of change, a positive experience is present and enforced.

Team building. Synergy is key to building a strong and well-functioning team. Therefore, leaders who want to succeed in implementing change, do not only understand the

importance of synergy, but they become its champion (Gilley et al., 2009). However, for true synergy to take place, key pieces like people's skills, values, and their preferred styles have to be the focus of a leader who wants to create a supportive, collaborative environment, rather than trying to coerce it (Gilley et al., 2009).

Coach. A coach's success rests on his or her ability to build relationships. When it comes to the process of change, a leader has to be able to build one-on-one relationships with his or her followers, the goal being to focus on trust and collaboration. It is important that during the entire process of change, a leader is maximizing on the strength of those they lead through collaboration (Gilley et al., 2009). A leader who is able to achieve success is building one-on-one relationships and collaboration, becomes more than a coach. He or she becomes someone to look up to as a mentor who lifts up his or her followers while leading them, a crucial combination during the process of facilitating change at the organizational level (Gilley et al., 2009).

As a change agent, a competent leader is someone who skillfully helps an organization navigate the process of change effectively and successfully (Hanson, 1973). For this reason, leadership is crucial, because it facilitates a successful navigation, adaptation, and implementation of change in response to constantly evolving trends (Gilley et al., 2009).

Organizational change has many components to it, many results, and many different ways of operating, as seen through this previous section. One of the key results deriving from new ways of responding, and adapting to a constantly evolving market place, is the coming together or different organizations. According to Davies and Kennedy (2009), partnerships between institutions, often referred to as consortia, are one of the many ways used by higher education

institutions to respond to industry-wide changes and challenges. This next section briefly introduces, and reviews higher education consortia.

Consortia. As the number of challenges are ever increasing and challenges are ever evolving, they continue to have an impact on higher education, it makes sense that higher education institutions respond accordingly. According to Davies and Kennedy (2009), there is increased pressure for these institutions to figure out ways to not only adapt to these changes, but to also survive the resulting challenges. Martin and Samels (1994) stated that colleges have become increasingly proactive in their efforts to respond to an increasingly evolving environment. As a result, collaborative partnerships are one of the many ways adopted by some higher education institutions (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). Martin and Samels (1994) stated that these strategic partnerships are often driven by economic, or academic reasons, or a combination of both. They can range from simple information sharing like an inter-collegiate library resource exchanges, all the way to institutional mergers. According to Davies & Kennedy (2009), consortia are the outcome of these collaborations.

A consortium is an association of member organizations that voluntarily come together with the goal to create working collaborations (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). According to Burley, Gnam, Newman, Straker, and Babies (2012), these voluntary partnerships are often a result of institutions coming together to work on one or several projects. In relation to institutions of higher education, collaboration can take different directions, the most commonly seen being resource sharing (Adams & Copland, 2007). In sharing resources and working on some additional economic collaborations, these institutions seek to achieve mutual benefits, because the current challenges in operating environment are forcing them to make resource allocation and efficiency in operation a priority (Boyce, 2003).

As collaborative partnerships that provide alternatives, consortia play a key role when it comes to change that takes place at the organizational level, especially at the higher education level (Boyce, 2003). They are important because higher education institutions have to be efficient in term of their operations, and resource sharing provided by consortia often allows provide efficiency in terms of how services are delivered (Eddy, 2003). However, despite consortia proven record of success, there are inconsistencies in terms of cooperation seen in many partnerships, even though such is a critical disposition they are created to promote and protect (Eddy, 2003).

Summary. Change has always been, and continues to be an inevitable reality for many organizations including higher education institutions, especially in the age of constant technological advances (Haveman et al., 2001). Therefore, the ability of an organization to adapt to a constantly changing environment is key to its survival (Van de Ven, 1986). According to Levine (2014), there is a correlation between how well an organization manages change, and whether or not it fails or succeeds. Kezar (2009) noted that in the process of change, organizational processes, conditions, culture, and relationships are altered, or adjusted, which creates various level of imbalance. This sense of being off balance is a result of adjustments that have to be made both at the individual and organizational levels (Kezar, 2009). Therefore fear, which is a product of this uneasiness created by adjustments to change, may ultimately lead to people being resistant to change (Kezar, 2009). Thus, preparing personnel well from the very beginning of the process of change—introducing, implementing, and reinforcing newer ways of conducting business—is very important (Stavrou-Costea, 2005).

One of the results of organizational change is the creation of inter-collegiate partnerships, also known as consortia (Martin & Samels, 1994). Consortia make it easier for institutions to

share resources, enhance the quality of services they offer, in order to achieve mutual benefits, because increasing social demands, and declining resources, are forcing institutions to make necessary adjustment, according to Boyce (2003). The next section will cover purpose, which is the third part of conceptual framework.

Purpose

There is rapid transformation that continues to shape the current operating environment within which higher education institutions are operating. On one side, world economies are constantly changing—technological advances continue impact how daily life is lived, the workforce has equally changed in terms of demographics—which has meant changes in workplace practices and changing focus both socially and politically (Haveman et al., 2001). Levine (2014) stated that change in the current age of technological advance is inevitable, putting higher education institutions in a position where they can either lead it or become its victim. According to McCluskey and Winter (2014), many sectors of the economy have been impacted by technological advances, and higher education has not been spared. As a result, how higher education operates has and continues to be altered because of these changes, which have transformed landscapes, as well as long held beliefs and practices.

Technological advances challenges, increased competition, and changing landscapes seem to be here for the long run (McCluskey & Winter, 2014), and given experts' predictions that many higher education institutions will go out of business (Woodhouse, 2015), purpose, which include survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment has never been more crucial. While some institutions will go through change with survival as the main purpose, others will do it for sustainability reasons, while others will be driven by mission attainment (Levine, 2014). The next section will review survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment.

Survivability. The review of the literature does not provide a single, agreed-upon definition of survivability. Survivability appears a mixture of many ideas including reliability, safe, and better positioned. This lack of one consistent definition makes it harder to quantify survivability. Although the literature circumstantially defined survivability, for the purpose of this study, survivability implies the ability of an institutions to stay in business. Thus, this definition from Business Dictionary (n.d.) appears to provide a definition closest to what survivability would mean for the purpose of this study. The "capability of a system or organization to withstand a disaster or hostile environment, without significant impairment of its normal operations" (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

Sustainability. Sustainability is another key term, the definition of which is not clearly defined in the literature. Although a variety of key words are provided as definitions, for the purpose of this study, sustainability is viewed through an economic lens. Economic sustainability is viewed in terms of various strategies put in place, which allow institutions to effectively, and responsibly use available resources, in order to continue functioning. The most consistently cited sustainability definition comes from World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). They defined sustainability as "that which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 8).

Mission attainment. Mission attainment is defined as the ability of an institution to attain its stated mission statement. This next section will review research and methodological literature. The next section will review research and methodological literature.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

In this section, an analytical review of methodologies discovered during the literature search will be presented. The presentation will reveal methodological frameworks that emerged out of the literature review, which were used to investigate phenomena in the research area.

These frameworks fell under three different categories, which are as follows: leadership, which include servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership; organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, mission attainment.

Despite a larger number of rich research studies that focused on higher education leadership, organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment—those that specifically concern to this research study used case study as a methodology. Therefore, the researcher concentrated on cases that used leadership, organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, mission attainment—as conceptual frameworks. The researcher selection criteria included case studies of small to mid-size, private, liberal arts institutions in the 21st century. The reason of this focus being that this study will mainly be on liberal arts, private institutions that are trying to navigate through 21st century academic, economic, global, and political challenges. The researcher further examined articles that focused on organizational change. Both Filer (2013) and Lehning (2013) are studies on higher education leadership, while Stevenson (2010) and Baker and Baldwin (2015) cover organizational change. Stevenson (2010) covered both leadership and organizational change. This next section will give a brief summary of each one of these studies.

Filer (2013) performed "an exploratory case study examining transformational leadership and organizational change within the presidency of a small, four-year university" (p. 3). The aim of this research was to "explore the phenomenon involving transformational leadership and organizational change" (p. 5). A descriptive case study (qualitative descriptive, storytelling) was used by the author as a methodology, in order "to lightly examine the occurrence, to determine if a relationship between leadership and change does exist within the presidency, and examine if any other factors influence that relationship" (p. 42).

Data was collected using interviews, as well as document analysis, as best methods for this particular study. The author aimed to find out whether transformation leadership, which was a preferred style among his participants, had played any key role in the process of change. Purposeful sampling was used as a participants' selection method. More specifically, history, and longevity as they related to participants' connection to their institution, were used for identification in terms of participants who would best help with the research study.

The length of service—those who had served during the last 25 years—was another key criterion used by the author to identify participants. The period of service span from leaders who served from 1986 up to the time when the study was being conducted. Specific to this study was that three presidents representing the institution being studied were picked as participants, as well as three faculty members who either served, or had been associated with the institution, which were located in the Middle Atlantic States region, were also selected as participants. The time period going back to 1986 was carefully selected by the author, without any clear explanation as to why, because of the significance that this period of time had when it comes to changes that have taken place at the higher education level. The author's stance in choosing this period as crucial and significant comes from the fact that the institution being investigated went through very significant changes during this period of time, which ultimately defined and determined its future.

After completing the process of sorting through and organizing interview data, and reviewing collected documents, the author concluded that in order for important changes to be implemented at the organizational level, it was not necessary for change agents, in this case institution leaders, to adhere to practice the four components of transformational leadership. Moreover, the conclusion of his study suggested that although change agents—higher education

leaders—may be in good positions to affect change, they do not possess the sole power to make change happen, because they work within systems that are made of people who are affected by change, and who may be resistant to chance. Therefore, not only do change agents have to be mindful of the needed involvement of others with their institutions, they also need to be aware of the importance of influence needed to shift cultures within institutions.

Another study the researcher reviewed was a study by Lehning (2013) entitled "Community College Presidents in a Southern State: An Exploratory Qualitative Inquiry of Servant Leadership." The aim of this research study was to "enable the researcher to comprehend the lived experiences of community college presidents in a Southern State" (p. 6). Moreover, the researcher wanted "to understand the practices, experiences, organizational effects, obstacles, and benefits of servant leadership" (p. 7). This research was a qualitative case study that used exploration as a method of inquiry. The researcher collected data using phone interviews. In terms of selection criteria, the researcher focused on upper leadership in the form of incumbent presidents. In terms of specific institutions, the researcher targeted leaders at community colleges from a Southern State who professed to practice servant leadership. Potential participants that the researcher identified were contacted using a permission request letter. Of all the leaders that the researcher reached out to for potential participation, "15 community college presidents granted permission, indicated they practiced servant leadership to some degree and would participate in this study" (p. 81). Collected data revealed that:

> Lived experiences, principles, ethics, and attitudes that inspire the leadership of community college presidents. The results revealed that their families and communities significantly influenced participants. Integrity was the prevalent personally held value integral to leading, servant-based activities were ubiquitous in leadership style, and

community involvement was fundamental to the governance of the community college. (p. 119)

"A Case Study of Liberal Arts Colleges in the 21st Century: Understanding Organizational Change and Evolution in Higher Education," was another study that emerged from the literature, which was conducted by researchers Baker and Baldwin (2015). This study focused on "private liberal arts colleges in the 21th century" (p. 248). The researchers "drew upon the evolutionary model of change in order to examine the organizational transformation of three liberal arts colleges—Albion College, Allegheny College, Kenyon College" (p. 248).

For this study, data was collected mainly using interviews as a method. Data collection was completed in two different phases. In the first step authors "initially interviewed administrators, faculty members, and executive leaders in a range of academic and administrative areas" (p. 249). Each chosen institution "was either undergoing or about to undergo leadership change" (p. 248). Because of the changes at the leadership level that took place while the study was ongoing, the researchers had to complete an additional set of interviews with incoming participants who met their participation requirements. The goal was to ensure that information they had to pursue their research study was current. Pre- and post-interviews were used in collecting data with interview questions specifically designed for each individual institution. Triangulation was used in this study to ensure data and research trustworthiness. Researchers selected institutions that were eventually part of their study based on a pre-determined established criterion.

In the end, they discovered that all three participating institutions had a different way of responding to both internal and external stimulants, which made sense given the fact that all three institutions, though liberal arts institutions, were different in many aspects. Results from

Albion and Allegheny Colleges highlighted their inability to successfully promote their brand, and suggested that both institutions focus more on how to effectively communicate, and clearly articulate their mission, both within and outside. Though leaders at Kenyon College had clearly articulated their mission and brand, the researchers suggested additional work to effectively communicate the college's mission and brand. In the end, all three participating colleges were "making key adjustments to achieve a viable balance among the varied forces and factors that shape what they are and what they will become" (p. 260).

Another study discovered in the literature was entitled "Higher Education in Hong Kong: A Case Study of Universities Navigating Through the Asian Economic Crisis," and was published by Stevenson (2010). The goal of this research study was "telling the story of how leaders at three Hong Kong Universities managed to navigate the Asian economic crisis" (p. 2). The researcher investigated "the role played by the Hong Kong government, the University Grants Committee, and the leaders at each institution in guiding higher education through economic, social, and political challenges" (p. 3). The following are institutions that were studied: "the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Hong Kong Baptist University" (p. 3). This study was chosen by the researcher because it presented "challenges faced by higher education since the "last great recession" (p. 6).

Stevenson (2010) collected data using historical documents of the institutions he was studying, personal interviews he conducted, which focused on the economic crisis that occurred in Asia (1997-1998), and which had an impact on many sectors on the economy including higher education. In terms of higher education institutions, he narrowed his focus to Hong Kong. Stevenson aimed to uncover the types of strategies used by these institutional leaders in Hong Kong, in response to the economic crisis, and the challenges it presented. Moreover, Stevenson

also wanted to understand and highlight other future strategies and processes that these leaders may have been enacting in anticipation of similar future challenges. He paid close attention to ways in which interactions between government policies and institutions strategies took place.

Among the successful discoveries made by the researcher in this study was an emphasis on the tenure of academic staff. According to Stevenson (2010), these leaders understood that they had to pay close attention to how additional tenure track positions were being awarded to staff. They ended up reducing the number of awards, which helped reduce the cost of operating, and ultimately provided budget flexibility as they moved forward. All three institutions that were studied successfully adopted this strategy. Even with this successful strategy, the ability of these institutions to uphold their mission and values during such challenging times, was key to successfully assess and implement newer ways of operating in the midst of an economic crisis. This next section will review methodological issues related to case study.

Review of Methodological Issues

Case study. Merriam (1998) stated that "a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon" (p. 2). This examination entails an in-depth investigative process of a case, which can include people, a social group, or an entity. Despite its many advantages, case study as an evaluation tool, has traditionally been considered to have several major limitations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Among case study weaknesses and limitations, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), are the risk for a researcher to "oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusion about the actual state of affairs" (p. 377). They further stated that being one of the qualitative methods of conducting an inquiry, "case study is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, because the researcher is the primary instrument of data

collection and data analysis" (p. 377). Because of the nature of doing a research study, the researcher who does both the data collecting and analyzing, is "left to rely on his or her own instinct and abilities throughout most of this research effort" (p. 377). Furthermore, unusual ethical issues related to case study exist, a good example being that an unethical researcher "could select from among available data that virtually anything he or she wishes could be illustrated" (p. 378).

The above stated ethical issue brings into questions concerning validity, reliability, and generalizability of any study that uses case study as a method of inquiry. According to Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993), "case study as a methodology has been faulted for its lack of representativeness . . . and its lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to the study" (p. 23).

Despite its weaknesses and limitations, case study remains one of the widely used research methodology. According to Yin (1994), if case study had concerning weaknesses, there would be no point for researchers, especially those in some reputable fields, to continue using it. Moreover, case study is preferred because of its ability to nurture creativity, and allow for a reflexive innovation (Morse, 2009). "Case study data is strong in reality, because case studies are down to earth and attention holding" (Cohen & Manion, 1995, p. 146). And according to Hakim (1987), case study as a method of inquiry is highly regarded because of its abilities to provide what he called "rich details" (p. 61). He further stated that "case study can provide a richly detailed portrait of a particular social phenomenon" (p. 61). Ary, Jacob, and Razaviah (1972), stated that what makes case study a strong method of inquiry "is the possibility of depth, in that it attempts to understand the whole subjects, or participant in the totality of the environment. Not only their present actions, their past, their emotions, their thoughts can be

probed" (p. 87). Because of their multi-sided, in-depth approach, there are aspects of human thinking and behavior on which case studies often shed light, which may otherwise be impractical studying using other ways. Yin (2003a) stated that case studies have six possible sources in terms of evidence. These sources include interviews, documents, observation, which can be direct, or participant-observation, and artifacts (p. 83). For the purpose of this study, only three of these sources—interviews, documents, and survey—were reviewed.

Interview. According to Kvale (1983), an interview is "a qualitative research method which purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee, with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). Even though there are several different methods of conducting interviews, the most commonly used methods include telephone, and using online tools. A face-to-face way of conducting an interview is the most often used method, because it is convenient, less costly, and effective (Kvale, 1983).

Like every other data collecting method, interviewing has its weaknesses and strengths. Some of the limitations that come with doing an interview include the fact that it is time consuming, and requires a lot of preparation (Turner, 2010). Furthermore, there is always high potential for interviewer error or bias, as factors such as tone of voice, opinion being voiced, how a question is rephrased, inadequate note-taking, and even appearance, may lead to bias or error. Although interviews may provide flexibility, too much of flexibility may lead to inconsistencies. Moreover, with interviews, there is potential to collect too much data within a short amount of time, which may lead to many undesired challenges. This is why having an analysis plan ready before data is collected, is critical.

Interviewing, as a data collecting method, provides great opportunities (Seidman, 1991). An interviewer/researcher is assured direct responses from intended interviewees, there are more

opportunities to probe, and observation provides another evaluation method. In addition, interviews allow direct responses from interviewees on what is important using their own words. They allow for personal interactions with interviewees, thereby facilitating the exploration of a topic in depth (Turner, 2010). Finally, interviews provide opportunities to clarify questions, which may increase the accuracy of data being collected (Seidman, 1991).

***Documents analysis*.** Document analysis, as defined by Pershing (2002), is a qualitative data collecting procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents. These documents can be printed, electronic, or both. They can also include program logs, performance, proposals, meeting minutes, reports, and other materials. As one of the many analytical, qualitative research methods (Rapley, 2007), document analysis requires data examination and interpretation to extract meaning, develop knowledge, and obtain understanding. Much like any other data collecting method, document analysis has its strengths and limitations.

Insufficient detail is the most significant inherited limitation of document analysis, according to Yin (1994). When institutional documents like meeting minutes, reports and projects are created, they have a specific purpose, and are never created with a research agenda in mind, making their contents not sufficient to answer a research question. In addition, Yin (1994) stated that documents are sometimes not retrievable, and even when they are, their retrievability may be difficult. Furthermore, depending on an institution policies and nature of documents sought, there may be a deliberate effort to block a researcher's access to documents. "Biased selectivity" (Yin, 1994, p. 80) is another limitation. An institution may choose to make available only documents that align with institution's policies, mission, and agenda.

Although the above-mentioned limitations are serious flaws, document analysis advantages outweigh these limitations. Documents provide an efficient and cost-effective way

of collecting data, in that they require data selection rather than collection, and are often available public records (Merriam, 1988). Moreover, since documents being studied are not altered by a researcher's presence, they provide stability. Documents also provide the exactness not found in other methods when it comes to details of events (Yin, 1994).

Survey. A survey is one of many data gathering methods (Groves et al., 2004). In addition to being used as a data collecting method, surveys can also be useful when it comes to data analysis and interpreting (Groves et al., 2004). This study used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire; one of the many instruments used in survey, especially surveys that target leadership related topics. A survey can be administered in many different ways including using an actual hard copy method, and/or online method. Although using survey can be a convenient and cost-effective method to collect data, surveys have their own limitations (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003).

Validity and inflexibility are the two biggest weaknesses of using survey (Andrews et al., 2003). A survey's inflexibility comes from the fact that it uses a single instrument, a questionnaire, as a way of collecting data. The issue of validity comes from the standardization of survey questions, which can make it hard to ask anything other than the pre-determined questions (Andrews et al., 2003). Consequently, results may not be as valid. Moreover, with surveys, it is impossible to know whether or not the respondent answers are truthful.

Summary

The last couple of decades has seen higher education go through a tremendous amount of changes, which have forever altered how institutions operate and how education is delivered. The many challenges facing higher education include a declining enrollment pool, deep cuts in terms of government support, technological changes, and increased global challenges. With

many institutions struggling to stay afloat, the role of leadership has been brought to light in the form of questioning its effectiveness and efficiency. The result of the skepticism surrounding leadership has been frequent institutional evaluations, which have also led to organizational change becoming a norm in terms of organizational operations for many institutions.

Given the important role leadership plays in guiding institutions through these challenges, this literature review focused on higher education leadership, its relationship to organizational change, and purpose, which focused on survivability, sustainability and mission attainment.

Leadership, which is a style or an act of leading, focused on four main styles—servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership. Organizational change focused on stages of organizational change based on Lewin's theory of organizational change—unfreeze, change, and refreeze. The emphasis on purpose was more on survivability, sustainability and mission attainment.

To better understand the current complex, and challenging world of higher education, and strategies and methods being used by these institutions in response to these problems, the literature review provided unique conceptual frameworks in leadership, organizational change, and purpose. These conceptual frameworks discovered in the literature review provided more than enough reason to believe that investigating the impact of leadership, would yield significant findings. Therefore, the researcher concluded that there was more than enough support in the literature to pursue this research project, which sought answers for the following research question: What leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership? This next section will synthesize the research findings.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Although higher education has faced challenges before, technology and globalization have amplified these challenges, and forever altered the way education is delivered, and how higher education leadership is viewed. Today, leaders in higher education can no longer rely on old methods and styles of leadership, but have to constantly develop new ways of leading, adapting, and keeping in touch with an ever changing, and challenging environment. These problems are many and may create fear in leaders who see them as challenges. However, to determined and motivated leaders who see them as opportunities, they create excitement and a reason to embrace change. That is the difference between going out of business, and staying afloat.

There are indications pointing toward some institutions constantly changing, adapting to change, and moving forward, while others seem petrified and stagnant because of tradition, making it hard for them to make necessary adjustments in order to keep up with a constantly changing environment. These petrified and stagnated institutions can be compared to a proverbial ostrich with its head buried deep in the sand, refusing to see reality, and only hoping the uncertainties and instabilities will somehow magically disappear. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

This literature review covered leadership as the main conceptual framework, because of the role it is expected to play for institutions seeking to navigate through these difficult moments. Although many leadership styles are covered in the literature, the most prominent were servant leadership, transformational, business, and situational leadership. Specific to servant leadership was the ability of a leader to care, while transformational leaders focused more on being visionaries. Business leaders focused more on resource management, and leaders who professed

situational leadership, as a style of leading, concentrated on the ability to adapt to changes, and evolve with circumstances.

Organizational change touched on several aspects of an organization including structural, strategic, technological, cultural and operational. Organizational change can either be an organization's reaction to a changing business climate, or a response to a challenge or crisis. Whether or not organizational change is a constant within an organization, or a process that happens periodically, depends on how often the environment within which institutions operate change. Currently, it is a constant process because change that continues to occur has persisted.

The review of the literature review revealed the existence of many theories of organizational change. However, the most widely used today is a model developed by Kurt Lewin known as the stages of organizational change theory. Lewin (1946) stated that there are three stages in the process of organizational change. They include the unfreeze stage, the change stage, and the refreeze stage. Contrary to what this model may suggest, the process of change does not only affect a single aspect of an organization, but affects an organization at all levels; organizational, group, and individual levels.

Consortia, which are inter-institutional collaborative initiatives, are often a result of organizational change, and a result of adaptability to the currently changing environment. These collaborative initiatives can be as simple as institutions coming together to create knowledge sharing entity like an inter-collegiate library, or as complex as institutional mergers. Whether simple or all complex, there is always a strategic motive behind the collaborative initiatives, which can be economic and/or academic. These collaborations are strategic in nature, which in many ways allow institutions to adapt to challenges, and assure their survival in some cases.

Another sub-theme covered in the literature focused on purpose, which include survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment. However, the literature mostly focused on survivability and sustainability. There was no easy way to quantify survivability, and sustainability, since they are both composites of many already unclear other things. For higher education institutions, survivability and sustainability focused on the ability of an institution to stay afloat, and sustain itself. With digital age challenges, increased competition, and changing landscapes, seeming to be here for the long run, and most experts predicting that a majority of higher education institutions will go out of business, the question of what survivability and sustainability mean, especially for small, four-year, private higher education institutions becomes crucial. In the end, survivability and sustainability are driven forces behind measures and steps taken by an institution, in order to effectively respond to a changing business environment. This next section will provide critique of previous research.

Critique of Previous Research

The literature review revealed that there is an important role for leadership when it comes to leading and implementing the process of change for an organization. Leadership is crucial in this process partly because of the economic impact it has on an organization going through the process. There are both economic and academic implications at play during this process as they relate to an organization survival and sustainability. Moreover, many leadership styles emerged out of the literature review, and a combination of styles was what was highlighted as effective and efficient rather than one single style, because of the weaknesses and strengths that exist within each style of leading. Moreover, there is more to leadership than just upper management, which was the focus of many articles and studies in the literature.

The literature suggested that leadership at the higher education level would greatly benefit from a combination of some aspects of servant and transformational leadership styles, while business leadership is best suited for the business world. However, all indications pointed to a world where a combination of various aspects of these styles is what would make any leadership style effective and successful in the current environment. Contrary to suggestions that there are styles specific to some fields than others, the real world suggests that these styles transcend any specific field.

Therefore, the type of leadership style needed for and organization to tackle these challenges, and be successful and survive, both academically and economically, is a melting pot leadership style. This type of leadership style entails a combination of some aspects of strengths from each style of leading. Although it is important that a leader spearheading change in this challenging environment considers a combination of styles, he or she also has to keep in mind the existence of circumstances under which a single style of leading is sufficient to manage a challenge. In the end, the style of leading does not choose itself, but the decision is rather left up to the individual to decide whether a single style, or a combination of styles make sense.

As higher education institutions work to adapt, most are figuring out other ways of raising additional funds to compensate for budget cuts, and decreasing enrollment numbers. In so doing, many are focusing on increasing their donors' pool. Donors may be both national and international, and may increasingly be getting an influential role at board level. Given the fact that board of trustees are influential when it comes to organizational change and funding approvals, understanding their levels of influence has never been more important. Moreover, as many institutions globalize, there is a cultural change taking place, which is hardly covered in detail when it comes to organization policies and procedures.

Although the words survivability and sustainability are often not directly used, but implied, as the ultimate goal for higher education institutions, little is covered about institutions which main goals are not primarily survival, but to advance institution's mission, with the conviction that by so doing, survival takes place in the process. In addition, simply because experts who have been tracking changes in higher education have, and continue to predict that there are possibilities of schools failing, and closures taking place in the next decade, this does not necessarily mean it will happen accordingly. If anything, judging from what the history of higher education institutions revealed, these institutions have always managed to adapt to these challenges, and not only overcome them, but continue to thrive.

This next section will introduce methodology, which will cover attributes, purpose, questions, research design, target population and demographics, data collection and analysis, limitations and delimitations, ethical issues, expected findings, and researcher role and bias.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The great recession (2007–2009) had a devastating effect on certain segments of higher education (Clark, 2010). According to Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport (2011), the economic challenges currently facing higher education began more than three decades ago. Today, higher education not only faces economic realities, it equally faces challenges related to political, and technological changes (Clark, 2010). Some of these challenges include a continually diminishing number of students, especially at the national level, who have traditionally been considered ready to attend college. In addition, the ever-changing world of technological advances has also impacted service delivery, as well as the ever-increasing cost of operating (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002). The combined effects of these threats have placed an increased, and ongoing financial burden on higher education.

In addition to the above problems, private institutions, especially those with small endowments, face additional tests of both national and international scope, according to Clark (2010). Although challenges at the international level have not had too much of an impact, at the national level, private institutions find themselves competing with public institutions that are becoming more viable as the economy stabilizes (Clark, 2010). One of the ways that colleges are responding to these economic woes is through the creation of partnerships (Denneen & Dretler, 2012). For this reason, this study focused on what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership.

While the review of the literature revealed the fact that challenges and resulting uncertainties have long been part of higher education (Rivard, 2013)—enrollment decline, accreditation issues, and funding difficulties, among others—those problems were unique to

individual institutions in the past (Hayes, 2012). However, most higher education institutions have continued to be variously affected, especially in terms of funding (Hayes, 2012). The last economic recession (2007–2009) is a good example of a challenge that affected all of higher education. Even though the recession greatly affected public institutions, because of their dependency on government support, small endowment, private institutions, which are tuition dependent, were equally affected, leading to layoffs, program cuts, and an increased in unfunded scholarship packages. According to Rivard (2013), these issues all led up to the current wave of closures and mergers.

Even with strategies in place, it remained daunting for private institutions with smaller endowments to not only compete with public institutions, but also to continuously try to lure students by cutting the cost of attendance, through the increase of their financial aid offerings (Rivard, 2013). In other words, while private institutions seek to adapt quickly to these changes in order to stay afloat, they simultaneously have to figure out effective ways to achieve survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment, without continuing to be too dependent on increasing their financial offerings, which is an unsustainable long-term strategy (Hayes, 2012).

With fewer than 10,000 students per individual institution, faith-based, private, not-for-profit, with a smaller endowment, higher education institutions the researcher studied, fit the profile of traditional not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges. The researcher examined what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership between three not-for-profit, faith-based colleges. In order to examine these leadership factors and traits, the researcher used specific attributes found in the literature review.

The following attributes are critical to leadership, organizational change, and purpose (survivability, sustainability, mission attainment), because of the role they play in helping leaders

achieve success (Starsia, 2010). These attributes are values, vision, goals, and objectives (Starsia, 2010). Although these attributes are an important piece of strategic planning, which is a critical part of organizational change, they also impact, directly or indirectly, the decision-making process of leaders (Starsia, 2010). Therefore, these are important attributes, which the researcher considered while evaluating leadership.

Values. According to Brandes and Stuber (2004), organizational values are non-negotiable values that act as a guide, and a framework around which strategic planning is built. These values are like path lights in a movie theater, keeping the path enlightened when it is dark, for anyone wanting to leave. Values help keep an organization on a planned path, especially when the road ahead is not clear.

Vision. A vision serves to provide direction and a sense of purpose (Hatter & VanBockern, 2005). A vision can be described as a clear picture, which not only provides direction by showing what an organization can become, but equally describes what needs to be achieved, and how that should be achieved (Hatter & VanBockern, 2005), not only in details, but in a photographic way. For example, a small endowment, higher education institution's vision, may be to grow into a major institution that is economically self-sustaining in the next decade.

Goals. A goal is a statement of intent which purpose is to provide guidelines for action (Nottingham, 1985). Goals can be short and/or long-term desired outcomes toward which an organization's efforts are geared (Nebgen, 1990). An example would be increasing overall student population in the next year, two, or five years.

Objectives. The difference between objectives and goals is in their specificity. According to Pennisi (2012), objectives are found within goals. Unlike goals, objectives provide a great level of specificity, and can easily be measured. For example, an institution recruitment

goal may be to increase the overall student population, and the objective becomes the enrollment target, which focus would turn toward answering the following questions: by how many? What is needed to achieve this goal? When does it have to be achieved? By being this detailed, the objective's purpose becomes breaking the goal into actionable pieces (Pennisi, 2012). If for example, the goal is to increase the overall student population, the objective becomes that in two years (when), the overall student population should increase by 10% (how many), it will need additional resources (what is needed).

Key performance indicators. Key performance indicators are quantitatively measurable values, indicating the effectiveness with which an organization is achieving its objectives (Ballard, 2013). Using the goal of increasing student population as an example, key performance indicators for a higher education institution may include data comparison of inquiries, applicants, admit, enrolled students between the years before, and after the objective was put in place. Key indicators exist to maintain accountability, and make sure that progress toward objectives are being achieved, according to Ballard (2013), who also implied that without key indicators, it is impossible to achieve goals and objectives.

Targets. Targets are visuals that give everyone involved in the process of trying to achieve or reach a goal a target to aim toward (Liem, Martin, Porter, & Colmar, 2012). Targets are desirable levels, which are used to measure achievement, thereby important in order to support key performance indicators. Targets are desirable levels of measurable achievement with timetables (Liem et al., 2012). A good example of a target are fundraising numbers, which may show the desired amount to be reached and by when.

Strategies. According to Watkins (2007), strategies are approaches, or a careful plan, methods designed to help achieve goals.

Summary of introduction. While it is a well-established fact that the great recession (2007-2009) had a devastating effect on higher education (Clark, 2010), challenges in the industry, especially economically, are nothing new, because they can be traced back three decades. These challenges include cost of operating, a decline in enrollment, and the impact of technology on delivery and operations. Although some institutions have put in place counter-measures, obstacles affecting operations, especially for small endowment, private institutions remain. However, institutions of higher education have been responding to these trials with success, with the formation of partnerships being one of the strategies being pursued by some institutions, according to Clark (2010).

Key to these partnerships are leadership, organizational change, and purpose (survivability, sustainability, mission attainment), without which success becomes hard to achieve. While evaluating leadership, organizational change, and purpose, the researcher considered the following critical attributes, which were perfect for a qualitative case study: leadership, process of organizational change, and purpose. The next section will review the purpose of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Through this study, the researcher sought to discover what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership. This study was a multiple case study of three faith-based institutions that came together to create a multi-university partnership, which the researcher referred to using the pseudonyms *Institutions A*, *Institution B*, and *Institution C*. At the time Bass (1990) published his study, over 7,500 studies on leadership or topics related to leadership, had been conducted. More than 20 years has passed since Bass published his data, which means the number of studies related to leadership has greatly

increased, according to Chappelow (2004). With such an enormous amount of available scholarly literature on leadership, it was necessary for the present review to be selective, to ensure relevance.

The researcher purposefully reviewed leadership theories that had direct application to the study. Hence, this study was investigated through the lens of one main conceptual frame: leadership, which includes transformational (Burns, 1978), servant (Greenleaf, 1977), business (Hawkins, 2009), and situational leadership (Hersey, 1979). This study was further investigated through the lens of two sub-themes: organizational change (Beyer, Trice, & Stevens,1978; Kaluzny & Hernandez, 1988; Lewin, 1946), and purpose—survivability (Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005), sustainability (Madeira, Carravilla, Oliveira, & Costa, 2011), and mission attainment (Elliott, 2000).

From a leadership perspective, the researcher evaluated what type of leadership style(s) and traits it took individual leaders within each institution, to not only help their institutions stay afloat, but also lead and participate in the creation of a multi-university partnership. From an organizational change perspective, the researcher evaluated strategies used by these institutions from the lenses of stage theory perspective (Burnes, 2004), which assumes that organizational change means a process of change which entails a series of stages. Finally, the researcher examined the degree to which this multi-university partnership was driven by survivability, sustainability, mission attainment, or a combination.

This conceptual framework and its sub-themes were a result of recurring themes from the literature, which included leadership, organizational change, and purpose. They focused on higher education institutions survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment in the 21st century. From a leadership perspective, the researcher investigated the type of leadership

style(s), and traits it took the researched institutions to overcome challenges, not only to stay afloat, but form and sustain a multi-university partnership. From an organizational change perspective, the researcher investigated the significance of organizational change, and what it meant to the process of change these institutions went through. Finally, the researcher investigated the role that survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment played in the creation, and support of the multi-university partnership. The next section will review methodology.

Methodology

Based on prior similar research discovered during the literature review (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010; Stevenson, 2010), the researcher determined that a qualitative case study was the most suitable methodology for this study. Moreover, the selection of a qualitative approach to this study was made because of its potential to uncover rich data (Yin, 1994), which was important for this research, since the researcher was looking into the experiences of higher education leaders. However, the researcher did not only seek to better understand these leadership experiences, as they related to the collaboration between Institutions A, B, and C, which led to a multi-university partnership, but the researcher sought to better articulate those experiences.

According to Klenke (2008), qualitative research centers on the discovery and interpretations of what participants bring to the research subject. Its main concern as a methodology is to develop explanations of social phenomena (Klenke, 2008). This is why in qualitative research, a researcher's aim is to try understanding reasons behind the occurrence of situations, or phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research allowed for a deeper exploration of the topic, helped uncover information that another approach would not have been

able to provide, because it allowed for both expansion and examples by participants on specific thoughts and ideas (Hatch, 2002).

According to Creswell (1998), there are "five qualitative approaches to inquiry" (p. 69). These approaches include "narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study" (p. 69). He defined narrative research as "spoken, or written text, giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (p. 70). Phenomenology "focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (p. 70). Grounded theory focuses on "generating a general explanation of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants" (p. 83). Ethnography describes and interprets "shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (p. 90). In addition, a case study "involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context, or setting" (p. 97).

The researcher selected case study as an approach for this study, because "it allows the researcher to explore a real-life, contemporary bounded system . . . through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 1998, p. 97). More specifically, an exploratory case study was used, which although descriptive, aimed to generate hypotheses for later investigation, rather than simply providing illustration (Merriam, 1998).

Case study. Yin (1994) stated that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). The context for this study was a multi-university partnership, which was a contemporary setting that presented the researcher with a complex set of contextual conditions, and phenomena that the researcher was seeking to discover and understand. Furthermore, given the size of each

institution, multiple-case study was appropriate, because each institution was treated as its own case, within the overall scope of the study. In addition, multiple case study allowed for checking consistency of any similar results (Klenke, 2008).

Although a single case study provides plenty of viability, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested multiple case study "in order to increase the methodological rigor of the study through "strengthening the precision, the validity and stability of the findings," (p. 29). Yin (1994) made an even simpler, yet powerful case for multiple case study by stating that "evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling" (p. 45). Klenke (2008) on other hand stated that compared to a single case study, multiple case study has distinct advantages, because "they offer the prospect of producing results that are less likely to be deemed idiosyncratic or unscientific" (p. 65).

Given their nature, multiple-case studies require the inclusion of more than two cases in the same study. According to Yin (1994), the inclusion of more than two cases allows for cross-case comparisons, and "facilitate the possibility of drawing patterns across the cases" (p. 46), which then leads to "more reliability in the overall results" (p. 46). Although the same research question and sub-questions were used across institutions, collected data differed because of the differences in participating institutions, further strengthening the case for a multiple-case study, as the most suitable method for this study.

Research Questions and Sub-Questions

What leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership?

1. What type of individual leadership style(s) was (were) prominent within the leadership of each institution, as it relates to the partnership?

2. In what ways did the style(s) reflect their collective, and institution style(s)?
3. What influences the leader(s) decision-making process?
4. What influenced the decision-making process of each individual leaders, and as a collective, within each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
5. How did individual leaders within each institution, and as a collective group, make decisions in relation to the partnership?

Research Design

The researcher investigated three institutions' strategies from Lewin's stage theory perspective (Burnes, 2004), which assumes that stages are a key part of organizational change. The design around this research was influenced by recurring themes that emerged from the literature—a case study (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Stevenson, 2010; Yin, 1994). According to McLeod (2008), a case study is an in-depth inquiry, using multiple data sources and methods, which focuses on a community, a group of people, or a single person. His definition, though similar to Yin (1994), and Creswell (1998), further included data gathering methods.

Willig (2008) stated that "case studies are not characterized by the methods used to collect and analyze data, but rather its focus on a particular unit of analysis: a case" (p. 74). Based on similar studies discovered in the literature, (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010; Stevenson, 2010), case study, as a method of inquiry was appropriate for this research study, because of its overall strength when it comes to rich, detailed description.

Target Population, Sampling Method, and Related Procedures

Given that this study focused on understanding leadership factors and traits that contributed to the formation, and support of a multi-university partnership, the researcher found purposeful, and criterion sampling to be appropriate sampling methods. Creswell (1998) stated that purposeful sampling is the process by which a researcher doing qualitative research "intentionally selects individuals and sites" (p. 213). Because this study focused on the multi-university partnership, researcher used purposive sampling for participants' selection, because not everyone serving their respective institutions were involved in the creation of the partnership. The researcher selected participants based on their level of knowledge concerning the development, formation, and support of the multi-university partnership. Participants included anyone who participated in initial meetings, ongoing meetings, budget proposals, curriculum development, and strategic planning. Those without such knowledge were excluded. Furthermore, the researcher provided an opportunity to participants who were initially selected, to refer other participants who they thought could provide more data.

Three presidents, one from each institution, were invited to participate. Each president was assumed to have greatly contributed by playing an important role from the very inception of the partnership idea, during the time of its implementation, and continued support. Moreover, using purposeful selection, the researcher sought the participation of additional key institutional leaders who were involved in the partnership at some point. They did not have to have been there from the very first time the idea was conceived, although they had to have played a key role prior to, during, or after the creation of the partnership. In total, the researcher sought the participation of 15 key members (presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, deans of schools), five

from each participating institution—five from Institution A, five from Institution B, and five from Institution C.

The benefit of doing purposeful sampling according to Maxwell (2013), is in the fact that it allows for a deliberate selection by the researcher, whether that is the settings, or participants. This deliberate selection then allows the researcher to get relevant information pertaining to a researcher's questions and goals, which "cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 97). Criterion sampling, which entails searching for participants who meet specific criteria, allowed the researcher to select participants on the "basis of identified characteristics that will provide needed information. The criteria are determined prior to the selection of the participants" (McMillan, 2012, p. 105).

Demographics and Characteristics

To best answer the research question, the researcher had to be critically focused in terms of enrolling participants who could provide information that was going to assist in answering the main research question. Therefore, two criteria informed selection of the participants: role within the institution and duration of service to the institution.

Role. A role being a function assumed, or a part played by a person in a given situation or circumstance, the researcher was interested in the selection of upper management personnel who helped coordinate partnership meetings, reviewed related documents, facilitated strategic planning, negotiated contracts, facilitated plans of action, helped work on, and finalized partnership agreements.

Time. Time is "the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). For the purpose of this research study, time equaled duration. The researcher selected from three available categories in terms the

period of time; the researcher was interested in those in position of leadership who were with their respective institution prior, during, and after the inception and implementation of the partnership.

The next section will focus on data collection, which is a process of acquiring and gathering needed information by the researcher, with answering their research question, as the ultimate goal. Therefore, this next section will present methods used to collect data in sequential steps.

Data Collection

Yin (1994) is well known for his work on case studies. According to him, case study has "six primary sources of evidence; documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 98). However, according to both Stake (1995), and Yin (1994), when it comes to data collection, the use of all of the above-mentioned sources of evidence is not what is important, because not all of them may be needed in a study. What is important is knowing which one is appropriate and effective. As such, of all the above-mentioned sources, based on similar cases in the literature (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Lehning, 2013; Filer, 2013; Stevenson, 2010; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010), documents analysis, interviews, and survey, were the appropriate data collection methods for the study. Yin (1994) noted the importance of converging evidence in the process of collecting data using multiple sources of evidence, because of the role of triangulation in terms of data validation.

Prior to data collection and analysis, the researcher conducted an initial document analysis of each institution, based on publicly available documents. By using an initial document analysis, the researcher sought to find out what each institution's public documents revealed

about them, in relation to leadership, organizational change, and purpose—survivability, sustainability, mission attainment, which were attributes that emerged from the literature review. This next section will discuss document analysis.

Documents analysis. Archival records are historical documents—records— containing primary source documents, which are retained for safekeeping by an organization, or institution, because of the value they hold, which may show the inception and evolution of an institution (Creswell, 1998). Creswell further stated that these records may "include service records, maps, charts, lists of names, survey data, meetings minutes, and even personal records such as diaries" (p. 160).

Institutional documents that relate to the multi-university partnership were requested from each school. It was expected that these documents were to provide a text-based source containing information about the creation and support of the multi-university partnership. Documents sought included, but not limited to key institutional leaders' meeting minutes prior to, during, and after the creation of the partnership—strategic planning meeting minutes, and any written communication about the partnership among the three participating institutions. To protect confidentiality, the researcher securely locked documents within locked cabinets, assigned security codes to electronic records, removed sheets containing identifiers, and properly disposed of documents.

Interviews. Kvale (1983) stated that "a qualitative research interview is an interview, which purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). Interviewing refers to asking questions in order to get answers from participants in a study. Interviews are important in a qualitative research study (Levy, 1988). Research shows that interviewing, which has a long

history of being used effectively in data collection, continues to be seen as the standard way of collecting data in qualitative research, because of its reliability in getting in-depth information about aspects of informants' experiences, which may include feelings, and ways of thinking (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Interviewing can be used as a primary method to collect data, or it can be used in combination with other methods of gathering data.

According to Creswell (1998), there are many types of interviews including structured, open-ended, and focused interviews, which can be done face-to-face, via phone, or computers. The researcher used structured interviews, which are verbally administered set of pre-determined questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), to collect data. Structured interviews can be quick to conduct (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), they facilitate the researcher's abilities to conduct many interviews within a short period. Moreover, because of how easy structured interviews are to replicate, testing for reliability becomes easier (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Survey. According to Groves et al. (2004), a survey is "a systematic method for gathering information from entities, for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members" (p. 4). The researcher invited participants to complete the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2000), which is a well-researched survey instrument (Tejeda, 2001). Often referred to as the MLQ, it has been validated, as a result of its many usage to measure leadership in various environments (Bass, 1998).

For this study, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire used was made up of statements about leadership style of participants who were tested. There were 45 statements in the questionnaire that were used to help identify, and measure some key aspects of leadership behaviors. The MLQ measured the following leadership styles: transactional, transformational,

and laissez-faire, which also is often referred to as passive-avoidant (Bass & Avolio, 2000). The MLQ is a self-assessment tool, which allow participants an opportunity to self-assess how they perceive themselves vis-à-vis their leadership behaviors. During the administration of the questionnaire, participants were instructed to mark the most suitable answer, based on MLQ's five-point Likert scale. Results from the MLQ were compared to interview results for commonalities and differences, and how they reflected key attributes that emerged from the literature.

In addition to each institution president, an additional 6 to 12 key individuals, four from each institution, who were presumed to have valuable information related to the formation, and support of the partnership, were interviewed. Interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes, with a built-in provision, which allowed the freedom to exceed time whenever necessary. With participants' permission, interviews were audiotaped, and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Interviews were then analyzed using analytic procedures outlined in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Once final participants were selected, they were each assigned a pseudonym to provide some level of privacy. Digital recordings were used to accurately record data for subsequent transcription. Furthermore, additional researcher notes taken during the interviews were used to add to data, and provided additional perspective and reflection. Each interview was transcribed within 24 to 48 hours of completion for accuracy and time maximization. Once data had been transcribed and reviewed to ensure accuracy, it was delivered back to respective participant for content verification. As stated by Doyle (2007), a research should be viewed by the researcher, as a meaning making "negotiated process" (p. 889) with participants, this way providing away by the researcher to engage participants throughout the research.

However, there was risk of content verification by participants threatening the credibility of the study. According to Julie (2010), it is important to check the process of member checking for traps, which has the potential to impact in a threatening way, the relationship between a researcher and a participant, and ultimately affect a researcher study's stability. She further stated that "if triggered, these traps may instill a participant with feelings of disappointment, uncertainty, or embarrassment, or squelch the willingness of a participant to continue in the study" (p. 1103). To avoid such traps and increase trustworthiness, the researcher considered the five recommended common procedures by Julie (2010), which are: pre-determining choices for participants checking procedures, pre-determining the extent of needed transcription, pre-determining the preciseness of needed language, informing participants of desired checking, and pre-determining the use of narratives in the final report.

The fact that the study looked into leadership factors and traits that initiated the formation of a multi-university partnership, entailed looking at those factors and traits from the perspectives of those leaders involved in the process at each institution. In order to maximize time and reduce cost, the researcher decided to conduct face-to-face interviews with Institution A leaders, and online interviews with leaders of both Institutions B and C. After data had been collected, it was analyzed. This next section will cover data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis, as summarized by Hatch (2002), "is a systematic search for meaning" (p. 148). Ian (1993) stated that data analysis provides an opportunity to "obtain a fresh view of our data." He went further stating that "we can progress from initial description, through the process of breaking data down into bits, and seeing how these bits interconnect, to a new account based on our reconceptualization of the data" (p. 31). Data analysis requires specific analysis

techniques, which can be found in the literature. Stake (1995) who is one of the highly respected experts in the field of qualitative data analysis, and one who is more often quoted, suggested four types of data analysis techniques.

According to Klenke (2008) who referenced these techniques, they are "categorical aggregation, pattern matching, analytic generalization, and explanation building*"* (p. 67). "*Categorical aggregation* is a technique used to draw meaning across multiple instances of data. . . *Pattern matching* entails comparing empirically based patterns to predicted ones. . . *Analytic generalizations* refers to reaching a pattern consisting of events and relationships between these events. . . *Explanation building* is a form of pattern matching, in which the analysis of the case study is carried out by building an explanation of the case" (p. 67).

Explanation building was the appropriate data analysis technique for this study, because it is one of the four pillars of case studies where the "iterative process begins with a theoretical statement, refines it, revises the proposition derived from the statement, and recycles this process to the point of saturation" (Klenke, 2008, p. 67). According to Pauwels and Mattysens (2004), multiple case study is made up of four pillars. They include theoretical sampling, triangulation, pattern matching, and analytical generalization.

Each participant had a story to tell (Yin, 2009); explaining what leadership factors and traits led them to allow their individual institution to participate in the formation, and support of the multi-university partnership. According to Yin (2009), *explanation building* is similar to pattern matching, but differs only when it comes to data analysis. Unlike pattern matching, explanation building uses a gradual process of building an explanation. For this study, the researcher was building an explanation from data collected from each individual leader, a combination of which data, analyzed on aggregate, led to building an explanation of each

institution's profile. Then, the researcher did a cross-comparison between the findings from each case, a result of which was cross-checked against the research question, and sub-questions. This process was a gradual explanation building process toward potentially answering the research question, and sub-questions, as well as providing other plausible or rival explanations.

To make for easy access and analysis, data analysis was an ongoing process; data was analyzed as it came in. Each interview transcription was followed by an analysis, and the same process applied after each obtained document and survey. In order to organize data, the researcher created an Excel spreadsheet as a means of labelling and saving data, which allowed the researcher to easily identify where data came from, and how it was collected. The researcher created a filing system that used unique identifications to save and retrieve data. All data had basic information, which included participant and researcher's names, location, date and time, and method used (interview, documents, survey).

Data coding, which is a process of sorting out and organizing data, according to Creswell (1998), and was defined by Hatch (2002), as the process of placing collected data, which is often seen just a collection of seamless sequences into similar categories (Dey, 1993), was an ongoing process. According to Dey (1993), data needs to "be sorted out in ways which correspond to the separate facets of the social reality the researcher is investigating" (p. 41). This way of sorting data allows the researcher "to put them together again to produce an overall picture" (p. 41), without which there is no way of knowing what to analyze, and how to answer the research question (Wolcott, 1994). The researcher used coding as a way of compiling, labelling and categorizing data (Lofland & Lofland, 1995), which allowed the researcher to better summarize and synthesize what was happening with collected data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

The researcher began the process of coding data by carefully reading, line-by-line, through fields notes, interview transcripts, documents, survey results, and divide the data into meaningful analytical units based on *a priori codes*, which are codes developed before data was examined. The advantage of using *a priori codes* resides in the fact that the author is able to work within well-established issues as they relate to the research question, to a point of safely expecting them to be clearly visible from the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). For this study, *a priori codes* were key attributes that emerged from the literature review—leadership, process of change, and purpose. By using *a priori codes* to analyze data, the researcher was prioritizing a set of pre-existing categories, and putting those on top of data, by looking for ways in which data fell within these categories. Given that this was a multiple case study, data was coded using each leadership level as its own case. *A priori codes* helped the researcher identify patterns within and across cases.

Although the researcher started coding using *a priori codes*, there was a possibility that new categories would arise, which the researcher would not have been able to fit within *a priori codes*. As a result, the researcher created news codes, which are often referred to as *inductive codes* (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although the focus was mainly on *a priori codes*, the researcher also allowed space for emerging codes, in order to capture different data characteristics, which the researcher believed would enrich both the analysis, and the final findings of this study.

After coding was completed, the researcher attempted to put data into perspective—comparing data results from expected findings and how they reflect the main research question, and sub-questions. According to Merriam (1998), "multiple-case studies analysis ought to be performed through two steps; first the within-case analysis followed by cross-case analysis (p.

194). First, the researcher examined results for each leadership level, and how they reflected key attributes—leadership, process of change, purpose—main research question, and sub-questions. The researcher then did a cross-case analysis, which according to Merriam (1998), allows the researcher to compare and contrast, by looking for commonalities and differences. In this case, the researcher cross-analyzed results from each level of leadership to confirm commonalities, or find differences.

The final step was to crosscheck the study findings using triangulation, which Yin (2014) refers to as "converging lines of inquiry" (p. 120). According to him, the use of triangulation allows the study "to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a similar convergence" (p. 120). He further stated that "data triangulation helps to strengthen the construct validity of the study . . . provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (p. 121). For this study, triangulation involved a cross-examination between document analysis results, cross-case analysis findings, and survey results from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Triangulation helped strengthen the researcher's evaluation, and made the research findings more "trustworthy" (Yin, 2014, p. 121). After the process of cross-case analysis was completed, the researcher used *narrative analysis* to interpret findings. Data interpretation was in the form of making meaning out of collected data findings, explaining what findings were communicating, and offering a conclusion. This next section will cover narrative analysis.

Narrative Analysis

A narrative is an attempt to describe what has transpired, through which the researcher presents things as they are, or as they have become. According to Riessman (2008), using narrative means telling a story. A researcher as a narrator gives form to an experience by telling

a story. Because giving form, which equals building interpretive meaning, is a means for capturing experiences, Riessman (2008) viewed narrative as a data analysis method used to capture human levels of experiences that may center around individual or group stories. She further stated that because narrative entails using storytelling as a form of answering a research question, narrative becomes a sum of different parts, which may be events, experiences, or actions. These parts are tied together to create one meaningful whole, according to Czarniawska (1998), and Franzosi (1998).

Using narrative allowed the researcher to construct new meaning through data interpretation, thereby making sense of what the researcher thought happened, or imagined to have happened (Riessman, 2008). Through narrative analysis, the researcher created an opening into the world of participants' experiences (Riessman, 2008). Richmond (2002) noted that there are four core categories on which a "typical narrative framework focuses" (p. 1). These categories include "*orientation,* which describes the setting and character" (p. 1). For this research study, orientation meant providing a background about the setting and participants. "*Abstract* summarizes events of the story . . . c*omplicating action* offers an evaluative commentary on events . . . and *resolution* describes the outcomes of the story" (p. 1). This framework demonstrated a process a researcher could use to co-construct meaning out of collected data, which was already coded. Although narrative may be considered another form of coding, unlike coding however, narrative goes beyond simply categorizing, or organizing data into themes to facilitate analysis (Riessman, 2008). The researcher's goal for this study was not only to identify themes, it was also to provide an interpretation of the data by telling a story. Therefore, narrative allowed the researcher to go from themes/category analysis, into interpreting what those themes and categories meant (Dickie, 2003). According to Riessman (2008), the

process of transcribing data entails telling a story, which inevitably involves interpretation. Narrative provides an opportunity to "explore the semiotic, cognitive, and socio-interactional environments in which narrative acquires salience and to which stories in turn lend structures" (Herman, 2003, p. 3). This next section will cover limitations, and delimitations of this research design.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

Limitations. Despite its many advantages, case study as an evaluation tool has traditionally been considered to have several major limitations. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "a case study can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusion about the actual state of affair" (p. 377). Furthermore, they touched on the limits of case study as a method of inquiry, as it relates to both a researcher's sensitivity and integrity. The concerns derived from the fact that data is both collected and analyze by the researcher who has "to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of this research effort" (p. 377). Furthermore, there are unusual ethical issues related to case study. One example being that an unethical researcher could be very selective as far as data collection and analysis is concerned—he or she can choose to illustrate what he or she wants.

Based on the above stated issues, there were strong concerns around how reliable the study was going to be, as well as its validity. According to Hamel et al., (1993), "case study has been faulted for its lack of representativeness . . . and its lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to the study" (p. 23). Those who critic case study, especially when it comes to what they perceive as lack of rigor, often point to what they view as the absence of standardized methodological procedures. However, there is

also a counter argument that the lack of standard procedures makes case studies more demanding and hard (Shields, 2007).

> The strength of qualitative approaches is that they account for and include difference—ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically—and most importantly, humanly. They do not attempt to eliminate what cannot be discounted. They do not attempt to simplify what cannot be simplified. Thus, it is precisely because case study includes paradoxes and acknowledges that there are no simple answers, that it can and should qualify as the gold standard. (Shields, 2007, p. 12)

In addition to some limitations in terms of data collection, specifically the lack of available enough documents, and the impact of using different interview methods, this study is limited in terms of its potential for replication, because all three institutions studied were founded by the same umbrella institution, with very similar mission, and philosophical view of the world, as well as executive leadership teams that have served and collaborated a various capacity prior to the creation of this partnership.

Delimitations. Delimitations describe methods used by the researcher to set study boundaries (Creswell, 1998). The process of setting study boundaries also narrows its scope. The result of setting boundaries means that whatever consideration is given to the study findings, is only applicable within those boundaries, which can be what is being studied, participants, and institutions where the research study is taking place. This study focused on leadership factors and traits that contributed to the formation of a multi-university partnership, from the perspectives of key leaders from Institutions A, B, and C. A combination of location, participants and methods, helped narrow the scope of the study, and allowed for data collecting efficiency and effectiveness.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Trustworthiness and credibility were reasons behind a slight change in the research question, as well as the final choice of potential participants. Initially, this study's focus was set on a single institution's leadership. However, the centering the study on a single institution raised questions about data credibility, and participants' honesty in answering questions from a researcher who in some ways is also considered a colleague, effectively making the researcher an insider. According to Adler and Adler (1994), researchers who use qualitative studies take on a variety of roles, which can range from being completely a member of a group being researched—an insider—or being an outsider.

Although not part of the leadership group to be interviewed, the researcher was considered an inside researcher because of the researcher's affiliation with one of the institutions being studied. An *inside researcher* is a researcher who chooses to study a group, which they are a part of according to Dwyer and Buckle (2009). To address this issue, the researcher decided to interview key leaders from all institutions involved in the creation of the partnership, which would make the researcher both an insider and an outsider.

The review of the literature revealed that any qualitative study should use verification for both data validation, and findings trustworthiness, (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1983; Willig, 2008; Yin, 2014). A thick and rich descriptions was used to achieve validation and trustworthiness. Moreover, the researcher used triangulation, reported all existing, and potential personal biases.

A thick description (Ryle, 1968), according to Denzin (1989), expanding from Geertz (1973), is detailed in nature, because it goes in great depth in helping the researcher describe his or her experience. Other than simply presenting theories, a thick description presents and describes matters in great details beyond surface appearances. "It presents detail, context,

emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another (Denzin, 1989, p. 83)." Furthermore, a "thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard" (p. 83).

Triangulation entails collecting data using multiple sources, and cross-checking for consistency, in order to produce understanding (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Yin (2009) viewed triangulation as "ethically needed in order to confirm the validity of the processes" (p. 119). He further noted that using multiple sources is an "invaluable advantage of case study, as a method" (p. 119). And without this key piece, case study as a strategy would have lost its core, which Yin called "something else" (p. 119). He referred to this something else as an interview study.

Transferability

Merriam (1988) stated that "external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of the one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 39). Given the fact that the findings of this study were specific to a small number of institutions, a specific environment and individuals, demonstrating that the findings were applicable to other situations was impossible. This was partly, because even in conventional practice, transferability is not possible, as specific contexts define specific observations within which they occur.

Expected Findings

Based on the institutions to be researched, and target population to be interviewed for data collecting purposes, the researcher expected to discover that when it comes to the formation, and support of the multi-university partnership, leadership played an important role. Moreover,

the researcher expected to find that although individual institutions had their own mission statement, influenced by a specific leadership style, it took a combination of leadership styles to make the partnership possible, as well as support it. Finally, the researcher expected to find that one of the main reasons, if not the most important reason—for one or all involved institutions—to either originate, or support the formation of the partnership, was the desire to survive in the currently challenging environment. Furthermore, the researcher anticipated to find that survivability, sustainability, and mission attainment were instrumental in the decision process of forming the partnership.

The researcher further expected that the findings would inform the literature in the sense that internal and external factors, other than leaders, were the true change agents, because of the influence they have on leadership when it comes to adapt to changes. This view of change agents is the opposite of what the literature revealed. The literature review viewed change agents as people in positions of leadership. Although leaders are the implementers of change, the researcher expected to find that the driving force behind change was not the leaders, but other factors that influenced them to act.

Ethical Issues

One potential conflict of interest anticipated during data collection involved potential participants. The researcher acknowledged that potential participants in leadership positions, who were instrumental to the creation, and support of the partnership at one of the institutions, were part of the researcher's dissertation committee. They were considered colleagues since the researcher was a staff member at one of the institutions. To minimize the risk for potential impact on collected data, the researcher decided to exclude them as final participants. The reason for this decision was due to the fact that as key players in the formation, and support of

the partnership, they may have been reluctant to provide information needed to answer the research question. Moreover, the disadvantage of including them also lay in the fact that they may have not be forth-coming, and completely open with information, especially knowing the researcher's position as a colleague at one of the institutions being studied.

In addition, as a staff member at one of the institutions being studied, there was potential that the researcher's position could have affected data collecting and analysis, because of some knowledge of the inner working of the institution. As previously mentioned, researchers who use qualitative studies, according to Adler and Adler (1994), take on a variety of roles, which can range from completely being a member of a group being researched—an insider—or being an outsider. Although not part of the leadership group to be interviewed, the researcher was considered an insider because of the researcher's affiliation with one of the institutions in the partnership.

An *inside researcher* is a researcher who chooses to study a group, which they are a part of according to Dwyer and Buckle (2009). The literature suggested that an inside researcher possesses knowledge that an outside researcher may not possess, and that an insider researcher may have an easier access to data that an outside researcher may not have. The downside of being an inside researcher however, is the potential of developing blind spots, making a researcher uncritical, and taking for granted the access to data.

Researcher Role and Personal Bias

The researcher played the initiator role for this study. To make sure that personal beliefs and experiences, especially those that could have impacted the study in terms of how data was interpreted, and conclusions were drawn, were acknowledged. Therefore, the researcher not only put in place appropriate safeguards (full disclosure, acknowledgement, and constant reminder of

personal bias, faith, connections to the institutions, and connections to leadership), but made sure that those safeguards were followed. Although there were many ways in which the researcher's personal bias affected data analysis of the case being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), there were equally many ways in which it supported and enhance it (Patton, 1990). The researcher acknowledged his private, Christian higher education connections, especially to one of the institutions being studied, as both an asset and a liability to the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1990).

To lessen the negative impact of inside researching, as well as having internal colleagues, who were instrumental to the creation and formation of the partnership, and were also serving on the researcher's committee, the researcher included outside participants from other involved institutions, with whom the researcher had never had any contact, nor any knowledge of their institutions inner working. This decision effectively made the researcher both an insider researcher (to one institution where the researcher was a staff member), and an outside researcher (to the other two institutions involved in the partnership). As an outsider, the researcher had the benefit of not knowing much about his research site, which helped him ask locals naïve questions. At the same time, as an outsider, there was potential for the researcher to misunderstand what he was going to be seeing and hearing.

Summary

Through chapters 1, 2, and 3, the researcher presented the manner in which the study on what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership was conducted. Chapter 1 covered the introduction and background about this study. Chapter 2 described literature review, which highlighted conceptual frameworks, and resulting attributes that were discovered in the literature. Chapter 3 covered research design, and

methodology, which included data collection and analysis methods, target population, sampling methods and related procedures. Furthermore, Chapter 3 touched on limitations, expected findings, and ethical issues related to the proposed study. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will present data analysis and study results.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to discover what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership between three faith-based higher education institutions. The following sub-questions were investigated:

1. What type of individual leadership style(s) was (were) prominent within the leadership of each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
2. In what ways did the style(s) reflect their collective, and institution style(s)?
3. What influences the leader(s) decision-making process?
4. What influenced the decision-making process of each individual leaders, and as a collective, within each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
5. How did individual leaders within each institution, and as a collective group, make decisions in relation to the partnership?

Six different sections make up this chapter. The introduction is first, followed by the sample, the third section details the methodology and analysis. The next section at number four provides a summary of the findings, and this section is followed by section five, which presents the study's data and results. The last section provides a summary of this chapter.

The researcher is naturally passionate about leadership, especially in higher education, because of the role higher education plays in every aspect of society. In addition, the researcher was interested to pursue this research because of the role leadership and higher education played in the researcher's own upbringing, having come from a family of administrators and government leaders. Moreover, given the current state of higher education, with many institutions having closed their doors in the last decade (Altbach et al., 2011), the researcher was motivated by steps being taken by some institutions to overcome these new challenges.

Moreover, the researcher was interested in eventually joining the academic field, and specifically as an administrator. Therefore, understanding these challenges, and ways in which leaders at various higher education institutions are responding to them, was important for the researcher. The research project was designed to collect data that when analyzed and interpreted, might add additional knowledge in the field of higher education, especially as it relates to how institutions are navigating current challenges.

The researcher collected and analyzed all data. Interviews, documents analysis, and surveys were the instruments used to collected data. Interviews were conducted using three methods, primarily because of participants' locations, which were in different states. Therefore, interview data were collected by way of face-to-face interviews, online audio interviews, and online face-to-face interviews. Documents were collected using existing online tools. Surveys were collected by the researcher using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), a program of Mind Garden which provided surveys, and a platform to both collect, and analyze surveys.

The methodological approach in this study was a multiple case design, which was based on prior similar research studies discovered in the literature review (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010; Stevenson, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher narrowed the approach to qualitative multiple case study because of the potential to uncover rich data using qualitative methods (Yin, 2014). It was important to collect rich, contextual information for this research, since the researcher was investigating the lived experiences of higher education leaders at three faith-based higher education institutions.

The researcher used narrative analysis to interpret findings, attach significance to the information contained in the data, make sense of findings, derive explanations, and draw

conclusions. Through narrative analysis, the researcher attempted to describe what had transpired. Furthermore, the researcher presented things as they were, or as they had become. According to Riessman (2008) narrative is an extended answer to a research question in a story form. Therefore, using data analysis, the researcher was able to discover the key role that leadership played in the formation and execution of the multi-universities partnership. Moreover, the researcher uncovered major leadership traits—aspects of a leader's character—cutting across the multiple cases, which included the ability to lead, communicate, collaborate, build relationship, care, and empower. As far as factors, which also did cut across all leadership levels, data analysis revealed two key factors that contributed to the formation and support of a multi-university partnership. These major factors were mission and a changing environment of operating.

Description of the Sample

The sample included leaders at the executive level from all the institutions involved in the partnership. The leaders included all three presidents representing the three institutions involved in the partnership, provosts, chief enrollment officers, chief finance officers, and deans of several departments. Overall, a total of 15 leaders were invited to participate in this study. These leaders included six females and nine male potential participants. The 15 potential participants were divided into five participants per each institution, with both Institutions A and C having three males and two females in the population sample, while Institution B had only one female and four males. The length of service—at their respective institution—for the population sample ranged from 6 to more than 30 years. Of the 15 potential participants invited, 10 participants accepted the invitation to be part of this study. Of the 10 participants who agreed to participate

in this study, three were females, one from each institution represented, and the other seven were males.

Participants were selected based on their level of knowledge concerning the development, formation, and support of the multi-university partnership. Participants included selected key leaders who participated in initial meetings, ongoing meetings, budget proposals, curriculum development, and strategic planning, prior to, during, and after the formation of the partnership. Among these leaders were all three presidents from the three institutions, each of whom helped initiate the partnership and oversee its execution. The participants also included three provosts who were part of the presidents' cabinets. And the participants also included chief enrollment and finance officers. There was a total of 10 participants interviewed—four participants from Institution A, and three participants each from Institutions B and C.

Although there was little ethnic diversity in the population sample, as well as selected participants (all of whom were Caucasian), there was nevertheless some gender diversity. Participants' ages ranged between 35–70 years. In the end, the important aspect of the sample was the ability of participants to provide answers based on their experience with the partnership to help answer the research question and sub-questions.

The following is a list of criteria used for participants' selection:

- Person over the age of 18
- Person is currently serving in one of the following key positions of leadership at one of the schools being studied: president, provosts, vice-president, secretary, dean
- Person played a key role prior to, during, and/or after the formation of the partnership. Key roles include, but not limited to coordinate and manage meetings, participate in decision-making process, and manage partnership related projects

- Person participated in initial meetings—within the first year of partnership inception
- Person is willing to participate by completing a signed consent form
- Person is willing to be available for the interview, and willing to complete the survey questionnaire

Optional criteria:

- Person participated in ongoing meetings between institutions
- Person participated in budget proposals—meetings and/or decisions
- Person participated in curriculum development
- Person participated in strategic planning

Research Methodology and Analysis

Based on prior similar research discovered during the literature review (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010; Stevenson, 2010), the researcher determined that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate methodology. Moreover, the selection of a qualitative approach to this study was made because of its potential to uncover rich data (Yin, 2014), which was important for this research, since the researcher was looking into the lived experiences of higher education leaders. However, the researcher sought not only to better understand these lived experiences as they related to the collaboration between Institutions A, B, and C that led to a multi-university partnership, but the researcher also wanted to better articulate those lived experiences in the narrative analysis section.

Yin (2014) stated that "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). The context

for this study was a multi-university partnership, which was a contemporary setting that presented the researcher with a complex set of contextual conditions, and phenomena that the researcher wanted to discover and understand. Given the differences in leadership levels, multiple-case study appeared appropriate for this study; each institution was treated as its own case, while data analysis was arranged by leadership level. In addition, multiple case study allowed for checking consistency of any similar and dissimilar results across cases (Klenke, 2008).

For this study, the researcher used explanation building. According to Klenke (2008) "explanation building is a form of pattern matching, in which the analysis of the case study is carried out by building an explanation of the case" (p. 67). Explanation building was the appropriate data analysis technique for this study, because it allowed for a logical linking of data to key attributes, and ultimately to answering the research questions.

Data was analyzed as it was being collected. Each interview transcription was followed by an analysis period. After data had been collected, and organized, the researcher began the process of data coding. Coding is a process of inquiry that allows a researcher to organize data through classification and identification (Creswell, 1998). The researcher used coding as a way of compiling, labelling, and categorizing data, which allowed the researcher to better summarize and synthesize what was happening with collected data.

The process of data coding was carefully followed by the researcher who read line-by-line, through fields notes, interview transcripts, documents, survey results, and divided the data into meaningful analytical units based on a priori codes, which were codes developed before data was examined. For this study, a priori codes were key case study *attributes* that emerged from the literature review—leadership, which focused on servant, transformational, business, and

situational leadership; decision-making, which focused on communication and collaboration; and purpose, which focused on mission, sustainability, and survivability.

The researcher used manual color-coding. The first step was to create an excel spreadsheet, which included key attributes—a priori codes—and levels of analysis, see Table 1 below. After this spreadsheet was designed, the researcher began the process of analyzing data, by reading through each interview transcription, and field notes, finding out ideas, or concepts that reflected a priori code, and put those into the right column. Other ideas, concepts, meanings, that did not fit the description of a priori codes, were moved into the emerging codes section of the spreadsheet.

Table 1

Coding Spreadsheet

	Leadership	Decision-making	Purpose	Emerging
President level	Servant, Transformational, Business, Situational	Communication, Collaboration	Mission, Sustainability, Survivability	Length of service, reaching a wider audience, Christ-centered education
Provost level	Servant, Transformational, Business, Situational	Communication, Collaboration	Mission, Sustainability, Survivability	Personal connection, declining church, Christian community
Third level	Servant, Transformational, Business, Situational	Communication, Collaboration	Mission, Sustainability, Survivability	Shared faith, helping church, Personal connections

The researcher continued with this process by re-reading interview transcripts and field notes to make sure no ideas, or concepts were missed. Once this process was completed, the

researcher started the process of refining codes, expanding some codes, as well as combining codes that were similar, or explained the same idea, but was expressed differently. As the researcher continued the coding process, notes were taken by the researcher in terms of ideas that emerged, and how they were connecting to the research questions.

After revising these ideas and concepts, which were both within a priori codes, as well as emerging from the data, and combining some ideas and concepts, while expanding on others, and working through their meaning, the researcher was able to combine these ideas and concepts, and there were eight codes that emerged from a priori codes, as well as emerging codes.

A priori codes helped the researcher identify patterns within and across cases. Although the researcher started coding using a priori codes, there were new categories that arose, which did not reflect a priori codes. As a result, the researcher created news codes, which are often referred to as *inductive codes* (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

After coding was completed, the researcher attempted to put data into perspective—comparing data results from expected findings, and how they reflected the main research question, and sub-questions. Merriam (1988) suggested using two steps to perform multiple case studies. "First, the within-case analysis followed by cross-case analysis (p. 194). First, the researcher examined results for each leadership level, and how they reflected key attributes, and research questions. Then, the researcher did a cross-case analysis, which is a method that facilitated the comparison of commonalities and differences between different cases. In this case, the researcher cross-analyzed results from each leadership level to confirm commonalities, or find differences.

The final step was to cross check the study findings using triangulation, which was an important step in the impact assessment and evaluation process. Triangulation, which is a

converging evidence model (Yin, 1994), helped strengthen the researcher's evaluation, and allowed the researcher to check for the validity of both data and findings, which made the research findings more trustworthy (Yin, 1994). For this study, triangulation involved a cross-examination between document analysis results, cross-case analysis findings, and survey results from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).

Table 2

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Attributes

Leadership Style	Full range leadership model style labels	Abbreviations
Transformational Leadership (Five I's of TM)	• Idealized Influence – Attributes (trusted) • Idealized Influence – Behaviors (principled) • Inspirational Motivation (inspires others) • Intellectual Stimulation (challenges others to be innovative) • Individualized Consideration (develops others into leaders)	• IIA • IIB • IM • IS • IC
Transactional Leadership (TL) • Constructive • Corrective	• Contingent Reward (expectations and rewards) • Management by exception: Active (actively monitors for mistakes)	• CR • MBEA
Passive-Avoidant (PA) • Passive • Avoidant	• Management by exception: Passive (delayed reaction to situations) • Laissez-Faire (Avoids Making Decisions)	• MBEP • LF

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, which was used in this study, is made up of statements about leadership styles. There were 45 statements in the questionnaire that were used to help identify and measure some key aspects of leadership behaviors. Each of the styles of leading has nine components attached. Factors characterizing transformational leadership, which

were divided into idealized influence (attributes), and idealized influence (behavior) included inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. There were two main factors that combined to form transactional leadership; contingent rewards and management by exception. During the administration of the questionnaire, participants were instructed to mark the most suitable answer, based on MLQ's five-point Likert scale, which ranges from 0–4 as follows: (0) Not at all, (1) Once in a while, (2) Sometimes, (3) Fairly often, and (4) Frequently, if not always. Results from the MLQ were used by the researcher as a reference point to confirm, or contradict interview results in terms of commonalities and differences, and how they reflected a priori codes. It is important to mention that although data on leadership management was collected (Figure I below), this data was not considered, because the focus of the study was on leadership styles, not management styles. Moreover, less than a third of the MLQ questions focused on management styles.

Table 3

Axis and Group ID

Axis	Group ID
Y-axis shows the average group score based on each style of leadership	Group ID 1= President Level
X-axis shows the group ID (see right table)	Group ID 2= Provost Level Group ID 3=Third Level of Leadership

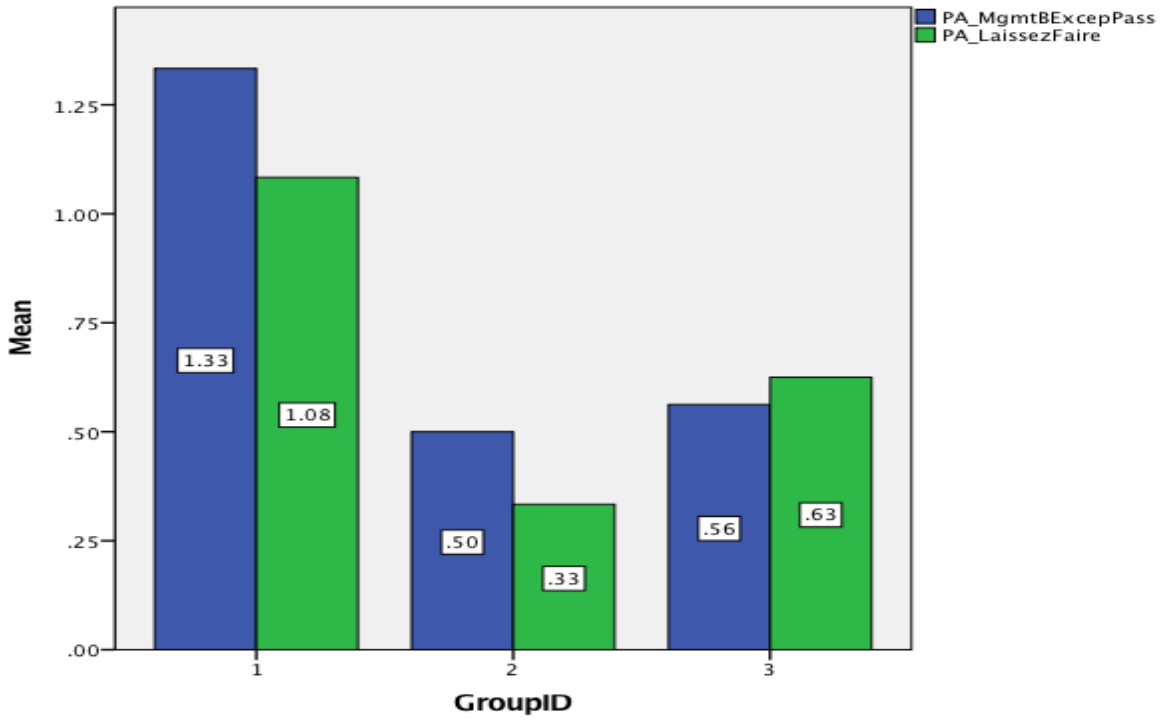

Figure 1. Leadership style.

The researcher used narrative analysis to interpret findings, and attached significance to what data was communicating. In addition to attaching significance, the researcher interpreted what data revealed, offered explanations, and drew conclusions. Through narrative analysis, the researcher was able to construct new meaning by interpreting data, thereby making sense of what the researcher thought happened, or imagined to have happened. By using narrative analysis, the researcher attempted to provide a portal into the experiences of participants and the ways they subjectively gave meaning to their experiences, as well as the methods of narrative discourse used in making meaning of their experiences.

According to Mishler (1986), there four different categories, which are core, or building blocks to a typical narrative framework. One of these categories is orientation, which entails describing the setting and character. For the purpose of this research, orientation meant giving a background about the setting and participants. Abstract is a summary of events relating to the

story being told or "an evaluative commentary on events, and resolution, which describe the outcomes of the story" (p. 236). Mischler's framework demonstrated a process a researcher can use to co-construct meaning out of collected data, which was already coded.

The researcher's goal for this study was not only to identify themes, it was also to provide an interpretation of the data by telling a story. Narrative allowed the researcher to go from themes/category analysis, into interpreting what those themes and categories meant, because the process of transcribing data entailed telling a story, which inevitably involved interpretation. Narrative provided an opportunity "to explore the semiotic, cognitive, and socio-interactional environments in which narrative acquired salience and to which stories in turn lend structures" (Herman, 2003, p. 3). Narrative analysis further allowed the researcher to interpret the results of the MLQ analysis, related them to a priori codes, as well as any emerging categories, and how they reflected documents analysis findings.

Summary of the Findings

Data collected through interviews, and documents, which were initially analyzed using a priori codes—attributes (Table 4) derived from the literature review, revealed leadership traits, and factors that were important and used by leaders involved in the process of forming and supporting the multi-university partnership at all three institutions involved in the creation of this partnership.

Table 4

A Priori Codes

Codes	Attributes
Leadership	Servant, Transformational, Business, Situational
Decision-making	Communication, Collaboration
Purpose	Mission, Sustainability, Survivability
Emerging	Relationships, Length of service, Personal

Traits—defined in Chapter 3 as aspects of a leader's character— that emerged included the ability of leaders to effectively lead both their immediate subordinates, and everyone involved in the process of forming the multi-university partnership. Moreover, the ability to care and empower others, especially those whom they supervised. They also included relation building, the ability to effectively communicate, and collaborate.

Factors—defined in Chapter 3 as components, characteristics that contribute to leadership—that emerged could be categorized into two different categories; mission, and changes in the current environment in higher education. Mission focused on a history of shared faith, and values that all three institutions shared because of being founded under the same umbrella institution. Mission further included, the desire to continue advancing the mission of a Christ-centered education to the world, while helping a struggling church in the process, which has seen a decline in its membership. Changes in the current environment focused on challenges, both economic and technological, that have impacted how education is delivered, and have forever altered how higher education institutions operate.

Presentation of Data and Results

This section will present collected data and results. Analysis will be presented by leadership levels, which levels will include the president, provost, and third level of leadership. With each leadership level, analysis will be presented based on key attributes, which emerged from the literature, as well as emerging attributes. These key attributes include leadership, which will focus on servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership; decision-making will center on communication and collaboration; purpose will emphasis survivability, sustainability, and mission. Furthermore, emerging attributes will also be introduced.

President Level Leadership Analysis. This section will start with Table 5 below, which presents a summary of findings at the president level, as a brief reference point of the data to be presented.

Table 5

President Level Summary of Findings

Literature-Derived Key Attributes			
Leadership	Decision-making Purpose		Emerging attributes
Data findings revealed that aspects all styles of leadership, as derived from the literature were used at the president level. However, the dominant style according to collected data appeared to be servant leadership, which entailed leading, empowering, caring for others, building relationship, and coaching were	Decision-making centered around two key areas, which were communication, and collaboration, and data confirmed that these two areas were instrumental in helping with the creation, and support of the multi-university partnership.	Collected data at the president revealed that although sustainability and survivability played key roles in terms of decisions-made to join the partnership, the mission that each institution was advancing was the catalyst in the end. In addition to mission, changes within the operating environment had great influence as well.	In addition to literature-based attributes, there were emerging ones at the president level, which included shared roots, values, and beliefs, the desire to go global, and advancing the "tow great commandment," through mission, which is the love for God, and love for others.

Data analysis at the leadership level followed the following order; first the researcher analyzed leadership styles at the president level, and the focus was on the four leadership styles that emerged from the literature: servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership

styles. The second level of analysis centered on decision-making, which focused on communication and collaboration, both of which emerged from the literature review as key attributes relating to the process of organizational change. The third level of analysis centered on purpose, which key attributes were survivability, sustainability, and mission.

After all three levels of analysis were completed, the researcher then summarized each level of analysis by focusing on key traits and factors that emerged. The researcher used results from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire surveys as supporting documents to confirm or repudiate leadership traits that emerged from interviews data. Moreover, the researcher used documents analysis data as supporting documents to confirm or contradict data that emerged from interviews, and mostly focusing on decision-making and purpose. Given the sensitivity of the data involved in this study, participants were given a choice between using their true identities, or pseudonyms, and all chose pseudonyms. Thus, participants will be identified by their chosen pseudonym. Table 6, below, shows positions corresponding to pseudonyms.

Table 6

Positions Corresponding to Pseudonyms

Institution	Position	Pseudonym
Institution A	President	Freeman
	Provost	Dawkins
	Third level 1	Highlander
	Third level 2	Briggs
Institution B	President	Pack
	Provost	Rivers
	Third level	Cunningham
Institution C	President	Mash
	Provost	Bridges
	Third level	Wilson

Leadership. At the president level, analysis of participant data demonstrated that a combination of leadership styles that were employed in the development and supervision of the multi-university partnership. The combined styles included servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership. Servant leadership appeared the preferred, and mostly professed style of leading by leaders at all levels of leadership analyzed, because of its embodiment at the core of each institution mission. This style was reflected in terms of how leaders related to, and treated their staff, how decision-making processes were approached, and its influence on institution mission, as well as vision.

Even with servant leadership appearing to be the preferred style of leading as expressed by leaders at the president level, there were also aspects of both transformational and business leadership that were equally important, which is why, many aspects of each leadership style were found in the other, and almost equally used by the leaders.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership, according to Mash was embedded in what "we do," focusing on individual institution missions, which have greater similarities than differences, because they are drawn from the same foundational background. For all three presidents, servant leadership appeared to center around people, which included both staff and students, but more specifically centered on the well-being of those whom they were entrusted to look after as part of their duties leading higher education institutions.

At the president level, for all three institutions, caring for others and being of service to them was very important to all three presidents, who saw people at the center of the mission they have as leaders of their specific institutions. Pack referred to caring for others as "one of our key values, one of our core values." He further clarified what he meant by stating that "servant

leadership as our core value is all about being of service to others, focusing on servanthood, on our students, on serving others."

For Freeman, this sense of service to others went beyond simply focusing on others. According to him, servant leadership is an opportunity to not simply develop other leaders, but to "develop Christian leaders." In Freeman's view, service and mission are intertwined, because mission is based on service. By his statement above, he was tying the idea of service to mission, which he clearly represented as leader of a Christian, faith-based higher education institution.

This ability of a leader to serve and lead at the same time, requires selflessness and care, according to Mash, because other than focusing on the leader, as is often the case in traditional leadership, the servant leader's attention is often turned toward others. Mash stated that "it is not all about you as a leader. As a servant leader, you really lead without claiming the spotlight at all times, because the position simply allows you a venue, or an opportunity to further the mission of institution for the greater good." Mash went further highlighting what he considered one of the key indicators of servant leadership, which according to him is the ability of a leader to understand and act to "serve the mission and not build their personal resumes." In his opinion, a servant leader leads from the back, because he or she focuses not on the self, but on the growth and successes of those he or she leads.

It is this ability and understanding of a servant leader to want to serve first, other than lead first, that appears to have played a key role at the president's level, as it relates to the partnership, because this desire to serve first appears to have influenced what Mash referred to as the focus on the "greater good," which was to be of service to others, and "expand our reach" according to Pack, so that more people can "be exposed to and experience a Christ-centered education" per Freeman. Pack further stated, "We needed to focus on growth and expand our

outreach to more diverse populations, which would enable us to serve student populations we had not yet served."

Furthermore, in addition to focusing on the greater good, the desire to further each institution's mission by being of service to others, facilitated the coming together of all parties according to Mash, because, as stated by Freeman, there was a need to "find the best people who could help fulfil the necessary tasks for success." Therefore, it was important to bring together a group of leaders who understood what serving others meant, and had to have servant leadership at the core of what they were doing. For Freeman, it was not just the ability to serve others, meaning those who were under the immediate supervision of the leader, but the ability to serve both the leader's immediate subordinates, and others. Mash emphasized the same point by stating that "one had to know how to work well with others who may not be from the same institution in order to make this work." By making this work, Mash meant the partnership.

Servant leadership was not the only style of leadership demonstrated by all three presidents, as all three leaders stressed the importance of a leader's ability to use a combination of leadership styles, because "the world in a complex place, and decisions at all level, and at this level in particular, are often a combination of many factors" according to Freeman. He further stated that the ability to be a transformational leader is an important aspect of leadership, because as "the environment around us changes, it transforms what we do and how we do it. Therefore, a key aspect of leadership is a leader's ability to adapt to change. In this case transformational leadership, as you put it" stated Pack. For all three presidents, people continued to be a focal point around which everything else rotated. Furthermore, the focus was more than simply caring for subordinates, as it was also about being transformative.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was seen as complementary to servant leadership (Basham, 2012). Transformation happens at all levels of the institution, through a leader's ability to both serve others while being an agent of change both individually and institutionally, according to Freeman, which leads to what Pack called a "cultural transformation," which affects institutions both individually (person) and organizationally (institution).

A transformational leader therefore, as stated by Freeman, serves to make change happen, to "empower those around him or her." Through empowerment, a transformational leader has the ability to create trust among his or her subordinates, because it is "all about bringing people together" according to Freeman. It is also about transforming subordinates for the better and for God's glory" in Pack's opinion, which aligns with Cox (2001) idea of transformational leaders as change agents. Per Mash, being a transformational leader means "doing things differently," which starts with "attracting the right talent to the right position, and allowing people an easy and constant access to the leader."

Mash further clarified that being transformational means being ready to adapt to change. Adaptability being the ability of a leader to "take the kind of action that brings about transformation to an institution, so that it does not become complacent, just simply doing what it has always done, but is willing and able to reinvent itself contextually. As the context changes, the institution adapts" according to Mash.

He further stated that transformational leadership requires "taking risks, taking calculated risks, and "because in order to remain viable as a functional and financial organization you really need to adapt to the changing context." However, being a transformational leader, according to Freeman, does not translate into perfection; "it is not perfect of course, you cannot always be

perfect." It means being willing to assess situations and apply transformational measures in response that will "get you the results that you want" in the opinion of Freeman. He further stated the importance of a transformational leader to have the ability to successfully build consensus, and put an effective team together in order to achieve a vision and/or a mission.

> I am the president, there is a chief academic officer, there is the Dean of the College of Education, and then the head of the Ed. D. program, and then finally into your instructorship. So, one of the things I cannot do is to reach through that line to you, to make it happen for you, and the other 6,000 students that we have. So, what I have to do is I have to be able to trust those people, and that means in order to do that, I have to find first of all what I consider to be, the best people possible and even that I do not do by myself. So, transformational leadership is all about bringing a team together and that team begins to make decisions up and down the line about people, about strategies, about vision and it is just that you have to delegate and you have to trust people to do it. But that means you have got to have good people in place.

Both servant and servant and transformational leadership have to work within a specific context, according to Freeman, in order to have an impact. In this sense, the context, which Mash referred to as an operating environment—a business context, or environment. Among the key common themes referenced by all three presidents as far as business leadership included the ability of a leader to have principles, a vision, good communication, a working business model, and willingness to take risks. However, even with these key themes surfacing, they rotated once again around people; the focus being on subordinates and others who make up each individual institution—an employee-focused way of leading, and client-focused way of leading in business.

Business leadership. At the president's level, the focus continued to center around people, meaning subordinates and others within their respective institutions. According to Mash, "we know we are in business, and therefore, the focus is not on business, but on best leadership ways to carry out our mission," which "cannot be separated from the margin, because no margin no mission" in the words of Pack. This focus on way to achieve the mission, can be interpreted as a business leader's ability to focus on ways to be successful within a business context, part of which is to "bring people together as one team" in the opinion of Freeman.

With the focus on risk-taking, having principles, and having a vision, innovation took center stage at the presidents' level. As Pack noted, "we had tried a number of different initiatives; we were looking for some new efforts that would enable us to move forward." According to Mash, it was risky, because being innovative in business meant considering "measured and calculated risks" and being willing to "step outside the box." Furthermore, business leadership requires not only being innovative and thinking differently, but it requires often "making tough decisions" in the opinion of Mash. He further stated that making tough decisions may "ultimately benefit the institution as a whole, even though it may temporarily hurt the parts of the whole." Although Pack appeared to concur with the notion that a business leader had to be innovative, and understood that business decisions are tough, he somewhat differed in his approach. He remained confident that a business model can be innovative, but it does not have to be at the expense of others, meaning that innovation should not automatically mean the potential for hurt. He stated:

> Obviously, we have to have a business model that is successful, but we do not have a business model, or do not want to have a business model that is successful at the expense of students and faculty, all others. Within our model of servant leadership, there has got

to be business model that continues to generate margin, because when there is no margin, there is no business.

For Pack, the idea of a leader being innovative meant the ability of a leader to use a combination of leadership styles. According to him, a business leadership style and other leadership styles should not be separated, because they complement each other. He rather saw them as being intertwined, making his idea of combined leadership styles better for effectiveness in management, and leadership in his opinion. "And hopefully through servant leadership, which I subscribe to, the institution is transformed, its culture is transformed, its vision is transformed, its results are transformed for the good, for the better. However, all things considered, it takes very different leadership styles, although trying to get those all to mesh and work together is a very complicated task."

Freeman, whose management style appeared to be one that could be characterized as a hands-off way of managing, "my leadership is built on finding the best people I can to fulfill the tasks that are necessary to succeed and then building a coalition around, or a vision around what that success might look like," would rather not make all the decisions. He understood a good business leader as one who "puts the right people in the right places, provides them with tools to help them make the best decision." Although his way of managing still revolved around people, it was also clear that at the end of the day, it was always about business, "you really do need to be a student of the enterprise." Being business focused, requires a leader to "have trust in those he or she places in decision-making positions." Freeman further stated that trust requires innovation, especially when it relates to allowing others to make business decisions that may potentially hurt the institution as a whole:

> So, one of the things I cannot do is I cannot reach through that line to you, to make it happen for you, and the other 6,000 students that we have. So, what I have to do is I have to be able to trust those people and that means in order to do that, I have to find first of all what I consider to be, the best people possible and even that I do not do by myself, so leadership is all about bringing a team together, and that team begins to make decisions up and down the line about people, about strategies, about vision, and you have to delegate, you have to trust people to do it. But that means you have got to have good people.

Although Freeman, Mash, and Pack, appeared to differ in their approaches as it related to business leadership, and the best way to achieve results, one thing was clear: innovation was at the center of how each President defined business leadership. However, all three presidents slightly differed on the process of how to effectively achieve innovation. While Freeman saw independent decision-making by close, trusted leaders and other subordinates, as being key to a leader's success in implementing and executing a vision, as well as a mission, Mash preferred consulting with those close to him, which included his immediate reports, as well as those further down the chain of command, and ultimately making the final decision. Pack on the other hand, saw innovation as somehow being embodied within servant leadership, which is neither him as a leader making all the decisions, or allowing other leaders empowered by him to make the decisions, but rather a democratic way of decision-making, which centered around consensus, and situation, which leads to situational leadership.

Situational leadership. Situational leadership centers around a combination of styles, because this style of leadership depends on the circumstance, or situation. In other words, a leader using situational leadership, acts based on situations that arise in order to make decisions

accordingly, which means that depending on a situation, a leader can use one, or a combination of many leadership styles. Thus, at the president's level, situational leadership focused more on adaptability to the current environment, making this style of leading flexible, because it is easily adaptable. According to Freeman, adaptability in leadership is a must due to the "realization that the world around us is rapidly changing. Therefore, as leaders, we need to adapt and change accordingly." Thus, to be a leader who uses situational leadership as a style of leading, meant for Freeman to be a leader who "assesses the situation at hand, and make the right decision based on the situation." This view of situational leadership by Freeman was also echoed by Pack who stated that "it would help us to be a more adaptable institution; adapt to what is going on in the market around us." To demonstrate his point around adaptability in response to a changing environment, Pack used students as an example, and stated: "students in graduate programs want to go from almost completely face-to-face, person-to-person, on-site, to fully online."

This type of situation, or this change being seen in the form of students' behavior and their preferences in terms of how they want to access their education, requires a response on the on the part of any institution that is provide the service. Therefore, according to Pack, "we need to respond accordingly by figuring out ways to move online." It was his assessment that "we need to meet our students where they are." This sense of moment and adaptability to a changing environment is important for continued success, because:

> There has been a tremendous amount of change since my college days, and now, and more change is coming. I guess what I am saying is that any smart leader knows that change is inevitable, and has to be able to adapt accordingly not only to keep the doors open, but to keep the mission going.

Mash's views of situational leadership were similar to Freeman and Pack. However, other than referring to changing situations as such, he called them "variables" that are "working against you." According to Mash, as "the context changes, the institution has to adapt" because "no context remains the same for any business." The ability of an institution or institutions to successfully adapt is necessary to excel in a changing environment. Because change is inevitable and keeps happening, successful leaders have to figure out ways to respond accordingly, in order for their respective institutions to "remain viable as a functional and financial organization" in the opinion of Mash. Therefore, not only do leaders have to help their institutions adapt to a changing context, which both Pack and Freeman called *environment*, they have to "change with the context," as Mash noted. The same point was stressed by all three leaders.

Hence, situational leadership, based on the responses provided by all three presidents, is about adaptability; the ability of a leader to not only adapt to a situation, or circumstance, but to do it successfully. Situational leadership is about constant evaluation and assessment, and constant monitoring of events that affect both leaders and institutions they lead, as well as the ability of any leader to be ready to make decisions accordingly, in order to "keep the doors open" in the words of Freeman, and to "keep the mission going" according to Pack.

What the four leadership styles covered in this section had in common was the process through which decisions were made, which was required to achieve a desired outcome, whether that outcome was keeping an institution's doors open, continuing to advance an institution's mission, or executing on an institution's vision. This next section will analyze decision-making at the president's leadership level, which centered around two key attributes; communication, and collaboration

Decision-making. Decision-making at the president's level centered on the process through which each president made, or helped make a decision, both individually and as a collective, as it related to the formation, and support of the multi-university partnership. Decision-making focused on communication, and collaboration, which were two key attributes that emerged from the literature.

Communication. Communication at the president level, which focused mostly on internal exchanges, took different forms. On one side, there were direct, face-to-face-meetings between all three presidents during the early stages of the formation of the partnership. These face-to-face meetings were mainly initiated by the president at [Institution A] according to both Pack and Mash. Pack stated that "we were invited to become part of the conversation, which I think originally started by [Institution A] president." Mash confirmed Pack's point by stating that [Institution A] president reached out to both "me" and [Institution B] President, "usually it happened at that level, presidential level." The three presidents met regularly, face-to-face, as well as remotely. "We were always in constant contact with one another."

This frequency of communication, which touched across various levels of each institution, as described by the three presidents, appeared to have been exactly what was needed to help facilitate the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. According to Mash:

> And then at the second level we had a steering committee that was established by, senior leadership from each one of the three institutions, the chief financial officer, the chief academic officer and such. And the steering committee then in turn met very regularly, both again face-to-face and remotely. So, all of the functional areas that were relevant to this conversation, there was a constant communication loop and also electronic sharing of

> information and such. And then we went several steps from that, we got all the IT people together from the three institutions, we got all the student services people together, we got all the registrars together, you know so on and so forth. So, that every functional unit had an opportunity to converse with one another and develop common protocols, that in turn would undergird this venture as we moved forward. So, there was multi-levels or layers of communications that were both horizontal as well as vertical.

In addition to having regular meetings, both face-to-face and remotely, the three presidents conveyed in the interviews that relied on their circle of leadership, that is, their direct reports, who held their own separate meetings, as conduits of information to and from their respective president. According to Mash, "at the second level of communication, we had a steering committee, which met very regularly, both face-to-face and remotely." The steering committee met to advance the partnership vision, discuss policies and procedures necessary to execute the mission of the multi-university partnership.

As a result of this constant, regular communication, Freeman stated that he "felt confident in the people I had in place to negotiate on our behalf, there was no breakdown in communication." He continued by stating that he "had total trust in my team who were constantly in communication with me." Trust, as expressed by all three presidents, and more specifically toward those who represented each one of the presidents and institutions on the steering committee, appeared to be an important aspect of leadership in this particular setting, especially as it related to both communication, which was also an important part of the decision-making process.

According to Mash, there was "a constant communication loop, as well as electronic sharing of information. Every functional unit had an opportunity to converse with one another,

as there were multi-levels or layers of communication that were both horizontal, as well as vertical." Although Mash felt very involved by being present and in constant communication with his team, a style he referred to as "a hands-on leadership style," which appeared to have been how he was communicating with his team, Freeman had a different approach. According to Freeman, as a leader one has to "delegate and you have to trust your people to do what you ask them to do."

Freeman appeared to prefer a hands-off approach when it came to management. He preferred trusting instead of delegating his team. Pack saw communication as being crucial, but circumstantial in terms of his level of involvement. According to him, "there were times when I had to be fully involved in the decision being made, and times when I had to trust our team on the steering committee to a best judgement decision." He further stated that he had full trust in those who were representing his institution, who "were acting in the best interest of our shared vision." In this sense, he was implying the importance of collaboration.

Collaboration. To better communicate and act on a shared vision and mission as it related to the multi-university partnership, the analyzed interview data demonstrated that collaboration was required. At the president level, collaboration took three forms, which were framed under the notion that working together was better and efficient for all parties, and expressed in the form of avoiding competition between all three institutions that shared the same foundational history, as well as seeing themselves as having an identical mission.

Collaboration was further framed around the reality that was being observed by the all three presidents, in terms of the current education environment, "the world around us has and continues to change" stated Freeman. Pack simple stated that "those days are gone," while Mash said, "times have changed." This realization that the environment within which they operated

continued to change, appeared to have motivated the three presidents to pull their resources together, and work under a single entity (i.e., a partnership) whose success required a teamwork approach, thus the "better together than alone" expression that emerged from all three president level interviews. Freeman stated that there was an "openness to the notion that you need partnership," because you "cannot be a lone ranger." The reason why it was important to create a partnership was because "we could do more together than separately or individually" according to Pack.

The same point of view was expressed by Mash who stated that it made absolutely sense to work together, because it was "a no-brainer to pull our efforts together; together we are many times stronger than we could have been by ourselves." And the goal as expressed by all three presidents being the desire to advance the mission upon which they were created by using their individual institution's resources under a single banner.

Thus, among the many reasons expressed by the three presidents for collaboration was the need to combine resources, which meant "sharing the risks and benefits" according to Freeman, and also tapping into the larger market by reaching to other institutions within the same system, which Freeman saw as using the collective to "our advantage by bringing the team together." According to Mash, the advantage was to lessen competition, and pull their limited resources together for "better use, especially given that we were all coming into it [i.e., the multi-university partnership] from different financial levels."

Pack referred to this way of viewing collaboration as "supporting and strengthening one another," especially for Institution B. Pack said the institution was not "positioned to take on the challenges of going fully online, nor did we have the infrastructure and expertise to do so by ourselves." Therefore, collaborating with two other institutions, one of which was "already in

the game," meaning already successfully established in the online market, and had all the expertise that came with this established status, made considerable sense in the words of both Pack and Mash.

Pack further stated that the "commonality of history and tradition between the three institutions," made for it "easier" for leadership, especially at the president level, to successfully collaborate. This sense of common and shared history, according to Mash, came from the fact that "we have a common, shared beginning when you think about our shared faith, and even looking at our mission statements, though worded differently, they are similar than different." However, even with this common history of shared faith and mission, in terms of their foundational beginning, Freeman still acknowledged the importance of understanding differences that existed between the three institutions, even though their differences did not appear to have impacted their abilities to come together, and successfully collaborate on the formation and continued support of the multi-university partnership. The key piece to their success in terms of collaboration was in their ability first to acknowledge the differences, and once they had done that, they were able to work from there, according to Freeman.

> First of all, I consider those two presidents my good friends, but we are very different people. We are in very different locations, and have different cultures. I mean [Institution C] is certainly not in our location, and neither is Institution B, nor are we]Institutions C], or [B]. So, I think the first thing is to respect the differences of who they are, who we are, and where we are. What we try to understand . . . I think the issue is trying to understand what is going on, what is [Institution B] facing and what [Institution C] is facing. And having a chance to share what we are facing, so that we have a better

understanding of each other's challenges, and then begin to get a picture of the conglomerate.

Although not explicitly mentioned as a reason for a successful collaboration as it related to the partnership, the reality of the nature of recruitment, which tied into "pulling our resources together to lessen competition among ourselves" according to Mash, was another strong factor that facilitated collaboration, and ultimately led to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. This desire to combine resources came down to economics, as it related to how the three presidents wanted their institutions to operate. According to Freeman, "when we figured out that we could not recruit successfully, and I mean to the level we are now recruiting, in the online world, we figured out, we better have some partners." Freeman further stated that it made sense to work with other institutions within the same larger system, because the "shared values, faith and history." And in the words of Pack, "we share more than just wanting to come together and form a business partnership. There is history here."

For Mash, it was less about recruitment working well, and more about Institution C not even having an infrastructure in place to support graduate level recruitment, and online course delivery. "We had tried to reach out to a third party for a potential partnership, but because of lack of infrastructure and a smaller online offering, no one wanted to collaborate and partner with us. This lack of partnership coupled with "declining numbers made it operationally challenging." Mash further stated, implying in this part of the interview that leaders at [Institution C] desperately needed to get some form of partnership going if they were going to both expand their market reach, and continue their mission.

Therefore, they welcomed the invitation for a potential collaboration on a multi-university partnership from the president at [Institution A], which according to Mash was "a God

send" because Mash's institution had tried many times before to get anyone to partner with them to no avail. In addition, participation in the partnership was voluntary, which according to Pack was important to the formation of the multi-university partnership, because the coming together of these institutions translated into resource sharing to achieve mutual benefits. "No one was forced to join, or to give something to be part of the partnership. Each leader volunteered their institution, because we believed in the vision behind the partnership," stated Pack.

Moreover, for Pack, the invitation to collaborate was accepted by him on behalf of his institution, not out of desperation, because "we were already being successful in our limited online offering, despite the smaller number of course offering that we had." However, it was the urgency to increase [Institution B's] online offering in terms of courses and "reach a much wider audience" that contributed a great deal to Pack making a decision to collaborate with the other leaders and support the formation of the partnership. Pack's decision reflected the desire to pull resources together for the purpose of benefiting all the institutions involved. This next section will focus on the purpose behind each president willingness to support the formation of the multi-university partnership.

Purpose. In this section of the analysis, the researcher will present purpose. Purpose centered on the reason, or reasons behind each individual leader's decision to not only support the formation of the multi-university partnership, but also the reason, or reasons behind their individual decisions to convince other leaders in their respective institution to join the partnership. The main focus in this section will be on three key attributes discovered in the literature review, which were mission, sustainability, and survivability.

Mission. When asked about the main purpose that drove each president to make the decision to join the multi-university partnership, pursuing and achieve the mission upon which

these institutions were founded was high on top of the list. According to Freeman, it was to "succeed at our mission," while Pack stated that it was the "commitment to doing things within the scope of our mission," and Mash said that "it is always about the mission." A review of all three institutions' mission statement spoke volumes, because of how almost identical their mission statements are. Within this desire to advance each institution's mission, as expressed by each one of the presidents, was the recognition of a "shared history," according to Mash, and a common identity, an example of which was referenced by Pack in terms of a "Christian identity."

However, according to Pack, it was not simply having a shared mission centered around a "Christian identity" that was enough. According to Freeman, the center of a shared mission was students, and more specifically, reaching out to new, potential students with the goal to "create transformative leaders" through a faith specific lens, which was Christian. Pack referred to this mission-centered desire to reach out to additional students, as meeting the "needs of today and tomorrow's learners centered in Christ." Mash saw this mission being achieved through "finding ways of continuing our calling; the traditional church related missional intent." Mash further acknowledged the creation of the multi-university partnership as a "God sent opportunity for us to begin our transition into online education through this partnership." Pack and Mash left no doubt in terms how they viewed the importance of a shared sense of identity, or collective identity, when it comes to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. However, resources were needed in order to achieve the mission upon which they were founded.

All three presidents acknowledged the importance of being financially stable in order to achieve the mission of both their respective institutions, as well as the mission that was going to be carried out through this new partnership that was begin created. While Freeman said that

money was needed in order to make mission work, Pack spoke in terms of a model of conducting business by stated that "we need a business model to achieve our mission." Both these two points made by Pack and Freeman were also echoed by Mash who stated that "you cannot achieve mission without figuring out the money part."

Although having resources, specifically monetary resources, was important and crucial to helping achieve the mission upon which these institutions were founded, all three presidents expressed a strong opinion in their stance that money should not affect their identity. Freeman framed his position by stating that money should not "dilute who we are." Pack was even more explicit by stating that "I do not want to have a business model that is successful at the expense of students and faculty." Pack's point appeared both supportive of the importance of keeping their respective institutional mission intact, but also contradicting both Freeman and Mash who saw money and mission as going hand in hand, and that one could not be achieved without the other.

Nevertheless, there was a consensus across the board, at the president level, around advancing the mission upon which each institution they lead were founded, and reaching out to a wider audience. The goal once again was not only to "equip students with a Christ-centered education" in the words of Pack, which purpose was to "serve both the church and society" according to Mash, but it was also to be supportive of the church, because "we are in service to the church, which gains the gospel a hearing" in the words of Freeman.

According to Mash, the coming together to create a partnership was equally about "maintaining our institutional identity, values, and character." Pack expressed a similar view that "we are very faithful to the original purpose and mission of the church." The same view about the importance of the mission upon which each one of these institutions were founded, was

center of the foundational documents from the Online University System, which focused on preparing individuals using a Christian faith lens, so, that these individuals can in turn successfully serve the "Church, community and world through a faith lens."

In addition to mission being seen as key to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, by all three presidents, they each also recognized, what Freeman specifically referred to as the "realities of the challenges we face; that the world is changing and institutions like ours are at risk." Mash also recognized that "we live in a different world that is constantly evolving, especially with the emergence and continued impact that technological advances we are seeing." And for Pack, it was not just enough to recognize that the "environment within which we have been operating has changed, and will continue to change, it is equally important to recognize how much of an impact that is having on us."

Sustainability. It is impossible to talk about mission without talking about how to finance the mission, because they "go hand-in-hand" in the words of Mash. According to him, "there is no mission without money." Institutions have to figure out ways to adapt, according to Freeman, one of these ways being the creation of the multi-university partnership, which "provided additional opportunities to sustain the successes that [Institution A] had been experiencing, because it was not just enough being successful, and not do anything to maintain and sustain success." Freeman further stated that "I do not believe that the financial model which guide both public and private education today is sustainable." Therefore, one of the ways to continue and sustain success was through the creation of a "model that created revenue share," which was viewed as strategic partnership.

For [Institutions B] and [C], online growth through partnership was one of the best ways to "achieve and sustain greater success" in the words of Pack. According to Mash, growth came

in the form of figuring out "ways to expand our market share, this way you are not just a brick organization, but a brick and click organization." In other words, Mash saw sustainability in terms of keeping his institution's mission going, as being the ability to go from being an on ground only institution, meaning an institution that only offered classes at a physical campus, to moving in the online market as well, meaning an institution that was offering courses using online means, where students did not necessarily have to attend a physical campus.

All three presidents acknowledged that sustainability could be best achieved if they were working together, thus the formation of the multi-university partnership, because the partnership, in the words of Freeman, "provided us a really good solution to issues we were facing in terms of finances; financial strength that comes with a solid enrollment base." However, although Freeman stated that sustainability was important to "keep our doors open," Mash stated that "we had to survive the challenges we were facing in order to sustain the gains we were getting."

Survivability. Another key factor behind the willingness to come together and create a partnership, had to do with survival. Institutions are faced with the pressure not only to overcome these challenges resulting from changes in the environment within which they operate, they have to be able to "survive these challenges" as per Pack, "especially for smaller, faith-based higher education institutions like ours," stated Mash. According to Freeman, "schools with 1,500 on-ground populations with no endowment, unless they are highly niched, are not going to make it." The same conclusion was reached by Mash who stated that "small faith-based or church related institution are at peril because their business model is no longer terribly functional . . . brick and mortar undergraduate education, which is incredibly expensive, will no longer work."

With such realization, and the potential of closing doors staring them in the face, all three presidents appeared to have understood they were facing survival. However, this was more so for [Institution B] and [C], than it was for [Institution A], which was thriving and was pretty much looking for ways to sustain the successes it was experiencing. Freeman noted that [Institution A] desired to "help others within the same university system keep their doors open." For [Institution B], survival depended on doing things in a different way. As stated by Pack, "if we were going to survive and sustain, we had to do things differently." And in order to do things in a different way, Mash recognized that they had to be proactive rather than reactive, in terms of figuring out ways to overcome challenges. For [Institution C], doing things differently meant joining the multi-university partnership, which was going to help them "take what we had in the bricks and mortar to online" according to Mash. Neither online documents, nor the memorandum of understanding mention survivability as a factor, as these documents mostly focused on mission.

Emerging attributes. Although the church "did not play any role" in terms of directly influencing decisions, helping a "declining church in terms of its members, was an important aspect of what we were doing" stated Mash who further stated that "we individually as institutions derive our mission from our historic roots that is our church. In that sense the church continues to have a presence in the formation and articulation of our mission."

For Pack, joining the partnership was also about what he referred to as the "grand idea," which was the hope to "cover the entire United States." Although he acknowledged that this was "too big an ambition, because of the differences in our institutions," he also contemplated how "fabulous" was this idea to bring together all of the institutions within the same system under the same umbrella. However, for Pack, this "grand idea" had the potential to not only be national,

but global, “in today’s world we believe our purpose is as much to equip students to serve in the world.”

For Freeman conceiving the idea of the multi-university partnership, as well inviting others to join was equally about “the two great commandments” as it was financial and mission based. According to Freeman, “you know God says you love God above all things and you love your fellow man like you love yourself.” He went on stating “and that is what it is really all about, it is the two Great Commandments. And so, the drive is, I want to create this kind of person and that is someone reflecting our philosophy and faith, not just solely that, but it is our faith perspective.” Moreover, he continued by saying that “since we are owned and operated by a church and those kind of things, do we believe in Jesus Christ? Yes. Do we believe that we were saved by grace? Yes. And did God give us two Great Commandments? Yes. And so, one of those leads us to our mission as an institution.”

History also played a key role for Freeman who, referring to the faith that he grew up in, stated that “this is the history I come out of and we have that in common with all Christianity. And so, we get ourselves in trouble when we start splitting hairs. And I choose not to go there, that is not who we are. We are here to create this kind of graduate. And that means everything we do is built on upon the foundation of things that we believe and then also upon the way we teach and learn.”

Summary. Data analysis at the president level revealed that the formation of the multi-university partnership, and its continued support, required a great level of leadership involvement, especially by the three presidents who drove decision-making, based on the purpose that drove each president to make the decision for their respective institution to join the partnership. Although the four styles of leadership—servant, transformational, business,

situational—were observed in terms of how the three presidents proceeded, servant leadership appeared to be the favorite style of leading across the board.

More specifically, people were important to all three presidents, whether it was students, stuff, and other leaders who were involved in the multi-university partnership. They expressed the importance of being of service to others through care and empowerment. Online documents analyzed, especially each of the institutions' mission statements appeared not only to focus on, but confirmed the place of servant leadership, as foundational to the creation and existence of these institutions.

Among the key themes that were clear when it came to their combined mission statements, words like Christian, transforming society, service to others, and Christ-centered were prominent. And above all else, being of service to others, whether students, faculty, immediate community, society at large, and even the global community, appeared to be an important aspect of what these institutions stand for, and a catalyst as far as their combined mission statements was concerned. However, it was not simply being of service to others, as it was carrying out this task in a Christ-centered manner, because their combined mission statements reflected a Christ-centered philosophy.

Moreover, it was not only each institution mission statement referencing service to others, it was also found on online documents from the Online University System, which was founded as the parent umbrella institution through which the idea of the multi-university partnership was first conceived. A summary of the mission statement found online focused on institutions within the larger University System being of service not only to the church upon which they were founded, but also serving their respective communities, as well as the global community, using faith as core to their work.

Key attributes of being of service to others showed up when the presidents spoke about their leadership styles. Among these were the ability to care for others, both their subordinates, as well students, building relationship, and the ability to collaborate with others to achieve both goals and mission. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire survey results by all three presidents confirmed a relatively high score in terms of transformational and transactional leadership (see Figure 2, Group ID 1 below).

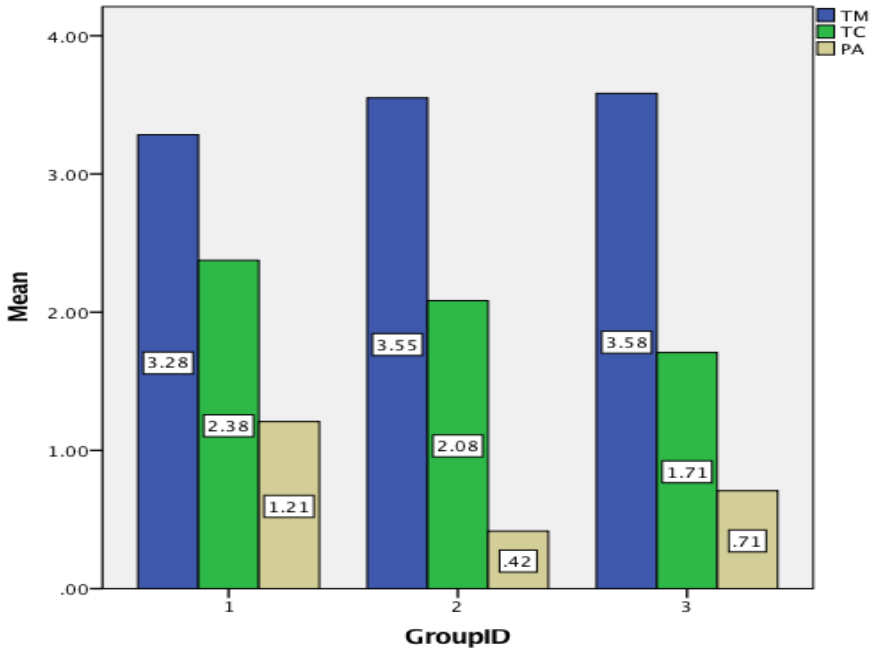

Figure 2. Presidents Results: transformational and transactional leadership.

The combined survey score average of all three presidents on the five I's—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation—of transformational leadership, was 3.2 out of 4. The graph shows that Group 1, which is the president level scored relatively high on TM and the lowest on PA. Those who engage in this kind of collaboration are strong in TM, moderate in TC, and relatively low in PA. Furthermore, the survey results specifically indicated that all three presidents served fairly often as role models to their followers, fairly often inspired and motivated their subordinates, they fairly often showed

concern when it came to the needs of others, whether that was their followers, or others, and fairly often encouraged innovation and creativity (Figure3, Group ID 1 below). Survey results also showed that although maintaining standards, having goals and targets were important in terms of achieving the mission, there was not as much a focus on standards, goals, and targets, as there was the focus on insuring subordinates' growth.

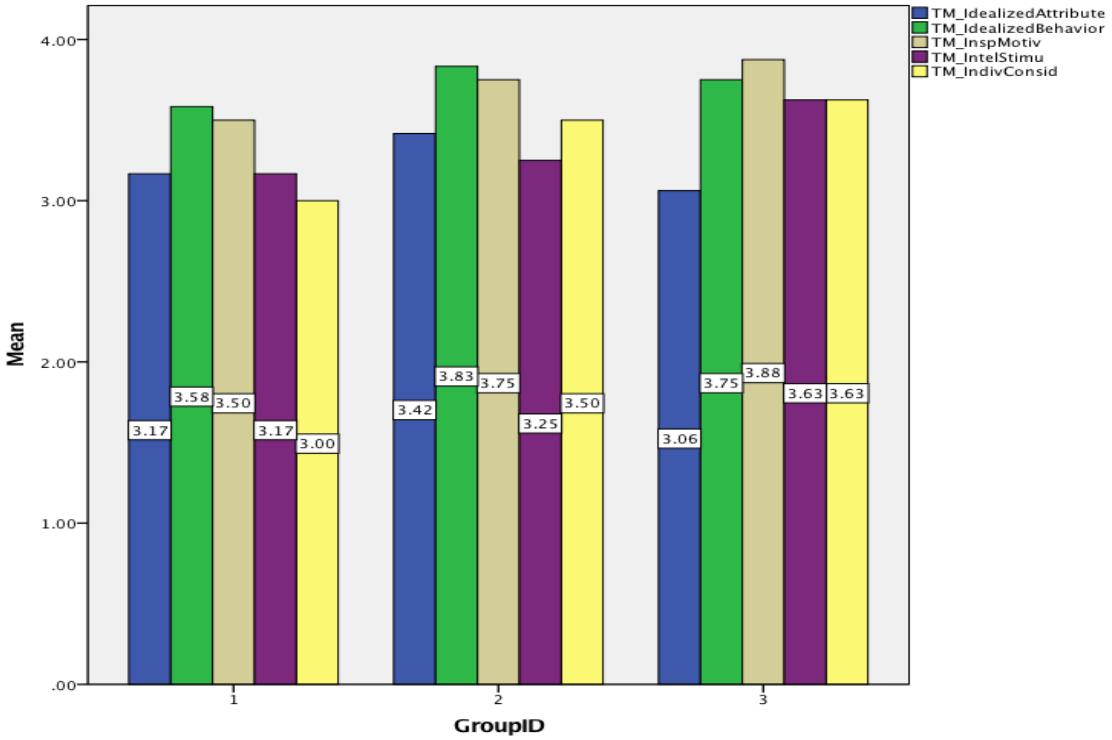

Figure 3. Presidents Results: inspiring and motivating.

In addition to leadership being important to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, decision-making, as well as purpose, were equally important. Interview data revealed that collaboration and communication played a key role. The memorandum of understanding document created by the steering committee, which was made up of each institution provosts, and other levels of leadership, confirmed the importance of communication and collaboration, and the role both played, especially at the very beginning of the partnership.

Moreover, the memorandum of understanding also confirmed that advancing the mission upon which each institution was created; combined to become the mission of the collective, was one of the important reasons why each president decided to have their institution join the multi-university partnership. Although mission was highlighted as being very important in the memorandum of understanding, being able to reach sustainable levels financially, thus surviving to continue advancing their respective/collective mission, was equally important, because mission could not be achieved without financial strength. The next section will cover data analysis at the provost level.

Provost Level Leadership Analysis. This section will start with Table 7 below, which presents a summary of findings at the provost level, as a brief reference point of the data to be presented.

Table 7

Provost Level Summary of Findings

Literature-derived key attributes			
Leadership	Decision-making	Purpose	Emerging attributes
Data findings revealed that aspects all styles of leadership, as derived from the literature were used at the provost level. However, the dominant style according to collected data appeared to be servant leadership, which entailed building relationship, coaching and leading, caring, and	Decision-making centered around two key areas, which were communication, and collaboration, and data confirmed that these two areas were instrumental in helping with the creation, and support of the multi-university partnership.	Collected data at the president revealed that although sustainability and survivability played key roles in terms of decisions-made to join the partnership, the mission that each institution was advancing was the catalyst in the end. In addition to mission, changes within the operating environment had great influence as well. There strong instances of	In addition to literature-based attributes, there were emerging ones at the provost level, which included shared roots, values, and beliefs, the desire to go global, and create a "Christ-centered community." The decision was also personal because of long history of service to the church, which tied

empowering subordinates	survivability, and sustainability at this level.	into the desire, as the only "branch of the church thriving" to help a declining church.

Leadership. At the provost level, it was clear from collected data that at the center of their collective leadership styles, the focus was primarily on people, which included their direct reports, as well as those with whom they were working on the formation of the partnership. The three provosts professed servant leadership, which focuses on being of service to others in an institution. And by others, the three provosts appeared to put an extra emphasis on their direct subordinates. The provosts were more interested in discussing the subordinates for whom they were leading, than entering into explanations of their leadership styles. Although the same emphasis in terms of focusing on subordinates was noticed at the president level, there was a major difference with the president level. At the president level, the focus was much more holistic; it included both their executive leadership team, and other leaders within their individual institutions as a whole. At the provost level, the focus was more on immediate subordinates, than being broadly inclusive.

The following analysis of the provost interview data is arranged based on key attributes from the data, which will be as follow: the first level of analysis will focus on leadership, which will include servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership. The second level will be on decision-making—communication, and collaboration. The third level will focus on purpose— mission, sustainability, and survivability.

Servant leadership. As self-professed servant leaders, the focus for all provosts centered on people, and specifically on two key areas of service; being of service to people and empowering them, making subordinates/followers mentors and crucial contributors toward the

growth of others. Once again, the provosts focused mainly on those who were directly reporting to them. However, the focus on people, and around service and empowerment, showed up differently for each one of the provosts. There were areas of differences and commonalities that will be presented.

For example, Dawkins, [provost at Institution A], compared servant leadership to an "inverse pyramid," specifically mentioning that being a servant leader meant "serving all the people that are working for me and with me, empowering them to do their jobs." He further clarified that by an "inverse pyramid" he meant to state that a servant leader becomes "the supporting pillar of those he or she leads." In this sense, the subordinates are "most likely to buy into the leader's vision at least on a consensus basis." Dawkins was presenting that servant leaders create a sense of shared power, and put forth the needs of subordinates at the center of what they do.

According Rivers, [provost at Institution B], servant leadership is more than just being of service to others. It is equally about the ability of a servant leader to empower others, especially his or her followers. He stated that "servant leaders' primary goal is to empower the leadership below us," which translated into the ability of a servant leader to empower others in a transformational way through his or her ability to care. Further personalizing servant leadership, River stated that "I have tried very hard to really empower the deans by providing adequate support and tools, and bringing them into the decision-making process. By doing so, you hope that you have a whole bunch of people who are happy most of the time," which spoke to the ability of a servant leader in terms of creating consensus. By putting others first and looking to be inclusive, servant leaders demonstrate what Rivers called "a mandate to use our gifts and abilities in service to other people."

Being of service to others as a servant leader, also showed up in the form of "collaboration and cooperation" in the words of Bridges, [provost at Institution C]. Bridges communicated that this meant being totally inclusive by involvement subordinates/followers at all levels, "especially those under us, so they can feel like partners in decision making." She went on to affirm that inclusion of all key stakeholders is one of the key components of servant leadership, because it is part of the "process of helping followers grow through giving them the same consideration as a leader" as per Bridges. By treating subordinates/followers on an equal level as the leader who is leading them, a servant leader is able to foster a sense of belonging by showing that they "value what each person is bringing to the discussion . . . by regarding them as another leader and not just a subordinate" according to Bridges. This level of consideration in valuing each member on an equal level is a catalyst for success; the idea of valuing each member of the team, which makes the team better. In addition to servant leadership, transformational leadership was another key style used by provosts as it related to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership.

Transformational leadership. Much like they demonstrated in servant leadership, provosts focused on empowerment and involving their subordinates in decision-making. According to Bridges this occurs by considering the subordinates as "partners." Other than leaders putting an emphasis on themselves at the provost level, transformational leadership required them to lift their subordinates and others on equal decision-making consideration. Therefore, at the provost level, transformational leadership was much more detailed in terms of how it showed up. As claimed by Rivers, being partners in decision making meant that a transformational leader is "never, ever making the decision alone, but trusting in the abilities of those he or she has empowered—the department chairs in their colleges—to be decision-makers

in their own right." Moreover, in the opinion of Rivers, creativity is what makes this way of leading transformational, because it is a "very creative of leading." Creativity is partly what created a sense of belonging and connection to mission, because it creates a "sense of belonging and allow people room to be innovative" in the words of Rivers.

With creativity comes the ability of a leader to be a facilitator rather than a dictator, which is transformational on its own according to Dawkins. Seeing himself as a facilitator and not a dictator, as far as decision-making went, Dawkins stated that it was "important for a transformational leader to work with people, empowering them by removing barriers, so, they can do what they need to do, which is the opposite of a regular pyramid." By a regular pyramid, Dawkins clarified by stating that "In a regular pyramid, as a leader I have all the answers, and I would tell everybody what to do, which is not correct, because there is more than one way of doing things." Based on Dawkins' statements, creating independent leaders by empowering them to be decision-makers in their own right is a key part of transformational leadership. According to collected data, through empowerment, a transformational leader has the ability to cultivate independent, not dependent decision-makers, effectively making the transformational leader a change agent.

Though stated in a slightly different way, Bridges referenced the ability of a transformational leader to empower and raise others to be leaders and partners in leadership. She stated that empowerment created a sense of "partnership, because when people have invested in the outcome of a decision, their contributions are different." Using a personal example, Bridges talked about trust in terms of her decision to empower her deans to allow their faculty to make critical programmatic decisions. She stated that "they are the ones who make programmatic decisions, when in fact this is often the work of the deans." Bridges further stated that being a

transformational leader meant accepting the fact that leadership was "a learning curve for all those involved," a process that created valuable and creative change. Much like servant leadership, transformational leadership works within a business model.

Business leadership. Although business leadership at the provost level focused on people, they went beyond simply the empowerment of subordinates/followers. The provosts touched on the impact of decisions made, on innovation, and on having a holistic vision to advance institutional goals and mission. According to Dawkins, alongside supporting and empowering subordinates, it was important to remember that "we are in business." And as such, "you need to take advantage of other people's expertise." Dawkins statement appeared to imply resources, and in this case human resources. For Rivers, it was not so much about taking advantage of human resources, as it was about what he called a "team approach." According to him, for a team to be successful, it required the "combination of abilities and expertise within that team to be working together."

However, it was not enough to just have a team, it had to be a cohesive team, in other words, an inclusive team. According to Bridges, a business leader has to "be able to listen and appreciate where others are contributing, which means thinking beyond their immediate circle of influence, and be visionary enough to consider the broader institution." She continued stating that "and always keeping in mind the impact that decisions will have whether financially or operationally." The above statement spoke to the vision aspect of business leadership, which requires both a devise plan and the action necessary to achieve the vision, which in this case was to consider what was in the best interest of the institution.

By thinking on broader scale, business decisions may become unlikable by some within an organization because a broader focus may create a disequilibrium, because "we cannot make

everyone happy and that is not the goal. The goal is to always make good decisions," according to Bridges. His point was echoed by Rivers who also stated that "I have learned that you cannot make everybody happy all the time, especially when it comes to making a business decision." However, judging from a business perspective based on the current challenging environment, the strategy has to shift, and the focus has to be on institutional survival, according to Bridges. This shift in strategy to respond to changes in the environment within which operations were taking place required "coming up with new ways of doing things" in the opinion of Rivers. This idea of thinking broader is important in terms of figuring newer ways of operating to keep doors open.

Although he agreed with the idea of figuring out new ways of operating, in response to a question that focused on a changing business environment, Dawkins stated that newer ways implied making mistakes, because if "you are not making mistakes, you are not trying hard enough, and if you are not trying things, you are not being innovative." Being an innovative business leader is especially crucial in a constantly changing business environment, because such an innovative leader has the "ability to effectively adapt and respond to forces in the marketplace" according to Bridges. For Dawkins, being innovative simply meant that a leader had "an entrepreneurial spirit," which does not imply that "everyone is a decision-maker." This last statement appeared contradictory to Dawkins' own prior statement about considering others as "partners and involving them in both the decision-making process, and decisions."

However, there is a difference between being involved in decisions and being a decision-maker. Dawkins was very quick to clarify his points by stating that "in the end, I know that I have a final say when it comes to decisions, but with input from others." Dawkins considered this a fair way of leading, because of the ability of a leader to get others involved in the decision-making process, and yet still maintain the integrity of the process, which may call for a final

decision-maker. This tied into the notion of situational-based decisions, which based on data, appeared to be situational based, requiring a leader's awareness as a decision-maker, and to always be ready to assess circumstances, and make decisions accordingly.

Situational leadership. Much like in business leadership, situational leadership at the provost level seemed to have a particular focus on the leaders as opposed to their subordinates. This particular focus on leaders themselves was due to the fact that they viewed themselves as both role models and coaches to their subordinates/followers. In addition to their abilities to respond to changes in the market place, situational leaders also have to adjust to the development levels of their followers. According to Dawkins, "when assessing a situation to make a decision, a leader who is involving of his subordinates, has to be able to assess where his or her subordinates are in order to harness the best feedback from them." At the provost level, two focal points became clear when it came to situational leadership; decision-based situations, and the ability of a leader to adapt to circumstances. Bridges stated that "everyone would like to see the outcome that they are hoping for, as it relates to any given situation, but an effective leader considers the moment, and adapts accordingly."

According to Bridges, a good example of adaptability, could be seen in the actions of a leader from an institution who is working to shift from "face-to-face education delivery, to more of an online approach." The key word for change based decision-making being "adaptability" in Rivers' opinion, because with the current constantly changing environment within which higher education operates, "we need to respond to a changing market environment, meaning that decisions have to be made based on current environment assessment." Bridges further implied that the ability of a leader to adapt to situations, and evolve with a changing environment is part

what makes the leader an effective leader, because they are "keeping up with changes and responding accordingly" according to Bridges.

Change-based decisions according to Dawkins, require a different perspective when it comes to rule following. They require a leader's acceptance that there are times when standards and rules may be disregarded, in order to make the best decisions. Dawkins stated that "I am not a rule follower, which is not to say I do not have standards, but they are not set in stone." Dawkins further stated that "although you have to have standards and uphold them, you still need different perspectives, different styles, because education is about change, and if you are not comfortable with change, it is difficult to progress." A situational leader is someone who though has standards and rules in place, is still open to the possibilities of changes, and is ready to assess and make decisions accordingly, because different situations call for different styles of leading. This next section will focus on decision-making.

Decision-making. Decision-making at the provost level focused on communication and collaboration, which are two key attributes that emerged from the literature.

Communication. Communication focused not on what the process of communication was, but mostly on communication that led to decisions. What was important to leaders at the provost level, was to have inclusive communication in order to get to a consensus. Rivers noted that "a collective decision, which derived from communication across all levels of leadership was at the center of what we were trying to achieve." Given that the process of change required careful planning and execution, it was important that there was constant communication, "because it is impossible to execute in the absence of communication" said Bridges.

Through constant communication, it became easier, according to Dawkins, and important to "know where people have a voice, because we had a lot of discussions, which required plenty

of input." In line with the same view, Bridges stated that "it is important to hear the voices of those that have important things to share about helping make that decision." And by "that decision," Bridges was referring to key decisions that were made in the process of forming, and supporting the multi-university partnership.

In order to facilitate communication, several meetings took place at all levels of leadership with "presidents meeting on a regular basis, and they spoke as one voice when it came to decisions" Bridges stated. Communication took the form of regular "face-to-face meetings, e-mails, and facetime" according to Dawkins. Although communication appeared free flowing, the levels of involvement differed from one president to the other. As Dawkins stated,

> [Institution A president] was more of a hands-off leader when it came to communication, and decision-making, as it relates to his team of leaders. He trusted us to communicate decisions with him, and we had plenty of autonomy when it came to decisions, especially major decisions, something that could not be said about the other two institutions' presidents.

Both Rivers and Bridges appeared to confirm Dawkins' point, as they both viewed their respective president's styles of communicating as being "directly involved, and making most of the decision with input from their staff." Unlike Dawkins who focused mostly on communication at the executive level, Bridges went beyond the executive level by focusing on her entire institution, and how communication affected decisions at all levels of decision-making with her institution. She stated that "when there was a decision to be made, we made it collectively." And by collectively, she clarified to say that "it was collectively both within the team we were working with to put together the partnership, as well as within our own respective campus teams." Furthermore, she stated that "we were giving updates regularly to the faculty."

According to Bridges, it was important to keep those who will be directly affected by change involved in the process of the changes that were taking place, because "they eventually become the implementers of change." And by them being the ones who implement changes, Bridges was referring to the ground level implementation of change. In other words, Bridges was saying that followers have to buy into change for a successful transition and implementation to take place.

Although communication took varying forms, Bridges stated that her preferred method of communicating with her subordinates was not through electronic means, because using electronic means felt like "a very flat communication." Furthermore, she wanted to "make sure the audience understood what they were hearing, and had an opportunity to have a dialogue," meaning that face-to-face was an effective way of communicating, according to her. The same method of face-to-face communication was also preferred by both Dawkins and Rivers, with Dawkins stating that "you do not only communicate when using face-to-face, but you are able to build relationship by connecting with people in person." Rivers on the other hand, considered "face-to-face works best for me."

Collaboration. Besides their abilities to effectively communicate, leaders involved in the process of forming the multi-university partnership, had to "figure out the best way to collaborate in order to achieve the goals we had set forth, and to ultimately reach our objective," according to Dawkins. The basis for collaboration when it came to the multi-university partnership centered on the understanding across the various levels of leadership involved in the formation of the partnership that "we could do things better together than we could alone," according to Dawkins. His point was focused on the importance of bringing everyone into consensus, not only to achieve change, but for change to be both successful and sustainable.

The same point of view expressed by Dawkins was echoed across the various levels, with Rivers stating that "we needed to pull all of our institutions together and work as a collective," while Bridges stated that "we could be stronger together than separate." All three provosts noted that collaboration was foundational to making the multi-university partnership a reality, as stated in the memorandum of understanding put together by the steering committee. The memorandum stated that:

> The participants seek to optimize their shared values and the shared significance and meaning of a faith-based higher education experience by leveraging resources, personnel and expertise. The participants seek to share a quality educational experience with as many people as possible. At the same time, each participant will continue to build and enhance their individual brands in both the on-ground and online arenas, subject to the terms expressed herein for building a collaborative on-line brand.

Collaboration took many forms, one of which was a sense of belonging. According to Bridges, "we felt like we were a team, which seemed to want to work together as one and not just a collective of different teams, which we were." He further stated that "we were not having our own agendas and trying to push that on somebody else," which speaks to this idea of teamwork. According to Rivers, comradery was "an equally important aspect of collaboration . . . my favorite thing about it was working with my fellow cabinet colleagues, as we worked extremely well together, and we collaborated on everything." He was pointing to the key role that collaboration played in terms of putting together the multi-university partnership. However, this sense of belonging and comradery, did not imply that collaboration made decisions easier, but meant that it made the process feel collective, because of how inclusive it felt. According to Rivers, "although we made some tough decisions, we always made those decisions together."

Dawkins viewed collaboration as not only being able to do things as a collective, but also being the "perfect solution to lessen competition among our institutions." According to him, "our collaboration was an attempt not to beat each other up in the market place unintentionally, because the idea was to get as many institutions working together as we could, so that we would not compete against each other." This desire to lessen competition among the three institutions came from their "shared historical beginning and shared values" in the words of Bridges. Her statement was echoed by Rivers who stated that their shared values come from the fact that "we have the obligation to continue the mission of the church." This shared sense of mission, which came from the foundational beginning of all three institutions was expressed in the memorandum of understanding, which stated "the participants seek to optimize their shared values and the shared significance and meaning of their faith in higher education experience."

To summarize, when it came to making decisions, whether those were simple, or major decisions, as they related to the formation and continued support of the multi-university partnership, at all levels of leadership, communication and collaboration played key roles in facilitating and informing the process. Shared values, which were part of the major basis of collaboration, were important in terms of the process, while styles of communication were also carefully considered. In addition, a sense of belonging to something bigger, and working not separately, but as one larger entity whose sole purpose was to continue advancing the mission upon which each institution was founded, was equally important, as it related to the idea of synergy, which was viewed as being crucial to building a consensus around mission, which also spoke to the purpose of this particular partnership. This next section will focus on purpose.

Purpose. Purpose at the provost level focused on the main reasons why leaders from all three institutions decided to be part of the leadership body of their respective institutions that made the decision to join together with leaders from other institutions involved, to help form the multi-university partnership. Purpose was analyzed through the lens of three key attributes, which emerged from the literature, and also included emerging attributes from the data. The attributes from the literature included mission, sustainability, and survivability. Although there were aspects of key attributes, as well as emerging ones that contributed to purpose at the provost level, in the end, the ability of the collective to attain mission, played a major role when it came to decisions on whether or not to join the multi-university partnership for each individual leader involved. Therefore, when it came to purpose at the provost level, mission was an important reason for joining the multi-university partnership. Other reasons that were provided by the provosts for joining the partnership, were more aligned with the theme of mission during the coding process.

Mission. Dawkins, speaking as one of the leaders from institution, which initiated the partnership, the willingness to initiate the multi-university partnership, came from "a desire to share our educational experience. It was not to make money, as we focused on a legacy program, because if we have to do things primarily for money, maybe we would start a pharmacy and medicine." Dawkins tied this desire to share "our educational experience," to the importance of identity. He stated that "first of, you have to be true to yourself, because decisions that you make have to support your mission." By emphasizing identity, a further clarifying question revealed that Dawkins was pointing to a mission driven purpose, which he viewed as being able to "share a Christ-centered education with as many people as possible," thus the idea of having a "legacy program."

Although Rivers echoed the same idea related to sharing a "Christ-centered education," she focused more on "service to others" as a major part of this mission. According to her, "we have a mandate to use our gifts and abilities in service to other people," which she also referred to as "a notion of vocation" based on "our" faith's founding figure. However, Rivers noted that service on behalf of people was not the only form of service. Service continued by extending the mission of the institution. This mirrored the mission of the church the institutions were associated with, which "spread both a high-quality Christ-centered education, and spreading the gospel through education," stated Rivers. In this sense, what Dawkins viewed as a "legacy program," Rivers perceived as a high-quality education program that centered on Christian principles of education. Once again, the focus of their arguments was their ability to be of service to others.

Rivers further described and elaborated on what a high quality, Christ-centered education would look like by stating that "staying true to our faith identity, having specific courses that deal with a Christian worldview, and providing basic Christian gospel-oriented beliefs." She also made clear that for her and the institution she represented there would have been no investment in the partnership, if "it was not for the mission that we share and are trying to spread." Furthermore, she specified that she and the institution she represented would not have been involved in a project, in this case the multi-university partnership that "did not respect the integrity of our mission." According to Rivers, the mission she had expressed was "rooted in our faith identity standards, which all institutions within our larger entity need to follow."

Bridges echoed both Dawkins and Rivers' focus on mission, and observed that the multi-university partnership was "an opportunity that would allow us to open our arms wider, and serve additional students remotely." In this case, Bridges was referring to additional students

who had not been exposed to "this type of education" meaning a Christ-centered education. Bridges perceived this attempt to expand through the multi-university partnership, as a reflection of "who we are as a larger entity, which principles are based on the tenets of Christian education." According to her, mission went beyond each institution's respective mission, as it touched on the wider church's overall mission. Speaking to the client-focused mission by implying that plans of actions are often in response to a visible need, Bridges stated that "this is part of our wider church mission, as we seek to develop people with the kind of values, not so much doctrines, but values that are Christian, that they can then take out in their own professions and their communities,"

Sustainability. Although mission was important to each one of the leaders at the provost level, they nevertheless did not overlook the "current realities of high education," according to Dawkins, and the challenges faced by many higher education institutions. The provosts recognized the importance of both sustainability and survivability, and the role that both played in the decision made by leaders from each institution, as it related to being part of the multi-university partnership. Dawkins stated that "organizations have to move, they have to be nimble, especially in today's environment of constant change," which highlights the focus on adaptability for these leaders. In order to change and adapt, tougher decisions had to be made to make room for involvement. According to Dawkins, "we gave up programs voluntarily, as it was always a financial decision." He further emphasized the importance of each institution's leadership being vigilant, and understanding that "no one solution is enough, but a combination was needed to sustain operations."

Rivers on the other hand, perceived the multi-university partnership as "an opportunity for growth and additional revenue." She stated that "revenue generating was definitely part of it,

as this was an opportunity to reach new markets, new audiences, and new students, which was a big draw." Her statement spoke to the importance of a leader's ability to respond to changes in the marketplace promptly, a point echoed by Bridges who stated that "this was an opportunity to generate more revenue for the institution . . . a really good way to share some services."

The difference in Rivers', and Dawkins' view of participation in the partnership, in terms of the issue of sustainability, can be linked to the respective institution's financial standing. For Dawkins, the multi-university partnership was an opportunity to maintain success that was being experience by the institution he represented, and continue to grow that success. For Rivers, participation was an opportunity to grow from "a survival place of operating into a sustainable place of operating."

Bridges noted that prior to the partnership "we only had two graduate programs that were just getting off the ground." The decision to join the partnership was not about sustaining, but rather an attempt at moving from a survival mode of operating, into the beginning of building something new. This something new was, according to Bridges, "move into online education, because of the shift we were witnessing from our students moving from face-to-face, to more of an online approach." Therefore, "we wanted to explore and bring online as a new program offering . . . this would help us continue to meet our financial obligations" Bridges continued. In Bridges view, sustainability was "probably key for all of us, because we wanted to have the ability to grow and not just hold the line, but sustain what we had."

Survivability. Bridges statement about "sustaining what we had," seemed to contradict Dawkins' statement that "for Institutions B and C, the decision to join the partnership was down to a survival mode decision, because they were struggling financially." Dawkins further stated that "given that all three institutions are "tuition-driven institutions, it is always a financial

decision." Thus, according to him, the multi-university partnership was more of a "mission and sustainability decision for Institution A", and more of a "mission and survival decision for both Institutions B and C."

Rivers somewhat echoed Dawkins' statement from Institution B perspective, by specifically stating that "we are the only institution now that is very rural and we are not highly populated . . . are simply not enough people in our area to take fact . . . we cannot afford ourselves any more as an institution." She further stated as another reason for joining the partnership, that if institutions of higher education do not "figure out a way to cut costs soon, we are all going to be in trouble," further solidifying the point made by Dawkins about Institutions B and C being in survival mode, as far as their finances were concerned.

Although Bridges appeared to have been acknowledging there was at least something to sustain at Institution C in the form of programming, it was clear she also recognized the struggles that Institution C was facing. She stated that:

> There is a business reality facing higher education, and we are a smaller institution that could not get into online because we did not have the product; we had not yet done any curriculum delivery online, nor did we have any space on campus to accommodate if there were additional students.

Through a further clarifying question, Bridges revealed she was implying that although efforts were in place to make improvements and continue the mission, Institution C was still operating in survival mode, because of the reasons she gave above.

For an Institution C that was already struggling financially, and which did not have any additional physical space to grow, the only way to proceed creatively, appeared to have been providing online education. This was why Bridges concluded that if "we had not come together"

meaning through the creation of the multi-university partnership, "it probably would have been more of a survival reality for us." At this point, Bridges was not implying, but acknowledging survivability, while not being explicit about it, based on researcher notes. Bridges appeared to have been defining survivability as not in an institution being in a bad financial standing, but rather being close to going out of business. In addition to a priori codes, which emerged from the literature, there were emerging attributes at the provost level of leadership, included personal decision, helping a declining church, adding greater value to the world, and creating a Christian community. This next section will cover those emerging attributes in details.

Emerging attributes. In addition to mission, sustainability, and survivability being among the reasons for leaders to come together, and join the multi-university partnership, there were emerging key attributes at the provost leadership level, which were different across the board. For Dawkins, besides joining his institution leadership in supporting the multi-university partnership, the decision was also "personal . . . It is not just a profession matter for me, or a church worker profession, but it is personal." He explained what he meant by personal when he stated that "my family has a lot invested in this particular school, I am a product, and alumni of this institution." Furthermore, he wanted to help "maximize the power of the larger system, as we are dealing with a church that is declining, and the most going thing is the university system." Therefore, according to him, the university system through the multi-university partnership was "a way to help the church."

Dawkins' sentiment about a declining church was echoed by Rivers who stated that "the different institutions are the only thing that is growing in the church." However, he went even further by looking beyond the immediate church into a "global family of Christians." He stated that "we would like to have a huge impact on the world . . . making the world a better place by

giving something of a greater value to the world." Furthermore, Rivers saw the creation of a multi-university partnership, as an opportunity to "create a Christian community."

For Bridges, it was important not to ignore the power of "shared values," which she saw in terms of not only faith-related values, but also "operating under the values of honesty, and respect, while valuing differences." Moreover, she also touched on a global perspective as referenced by Rivers by stating that "there are our students all over, graduates all over the world who have taken a piece of this place and planted it somewhere else." Therefore, according to her, it made sense to use these graduates in continuing to "spread a Christ-centered education."

Summary. Data analysis at the provost level revealed that the formation of the multi-university partnership, and its continued support, required leadership involvement, because most of the decisions were driven by the leadership involved, which included the provosts from all three institutions. Despite the fact that there was a combination of leadership styles, which included servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership, used by each individual provost in terms of decision-making, servant leadership appeared to be the dominant, and preferred style of leading at the provost level.

Servant leadership as professed by the provosts, focused on those around them, which included their direct reports, the presidents, other faculty members, and students as well. Servant leadership for the three provosts manifested in the form them being of service to others through care, coaching, guiding, and empowerment. Of the online documents analyzed, especially from each of their institutions' mission statements appeared to not only focus, but are founded on the idea of servant leadership. Christian identity, the transformation of society, being of service to others, including community and society at large, as some of the key themes that make-up the

core of these institutions' individual mission statement. And these key themes appeared to be founded on the idea of servant leadership.

Moreover, it was not only these mission statements that referenced being of service to others, it was also found on documents from the Online University System, which was founded as the parent umbrella institution through which the idea of the multi-university partnership was first conceived. The statement from the Online University System read that its focus and that of all institutions under its umbrella was to be of service to others including the church, and the global community.

In addition, documents relating to institutional vision also referenced the importance of being of service to others. Besides focusing a great deal on service, vision statements equally focused on being transformational. "[Institution A] will serve a diverse global community of students" the purpose being to prepare leaders—using servant leadership as a focal point, as far as curriculum is concerned—who will positively impact society at every level. [Institution B] seeks to provide an education centered on Christian identity, so that students can gain both faith-based and science-based knowledge to better serve both the church and the world. [Institution C] focuses on engaging a diverse student body through a liberal arts education centered on Christian values, for servant leadership in both the church and their community.

Among leadership traits that were expressed at the provost level, as they related to the various leadership styles included their abilities to not only care, but to coach and guide, as part of both servant and transformational leadership. Furthermore, relationship played an important role to achieve the goals and mission of the multi-university partnership, both as it related to their relationship to their respective presidents, colleagues with whom they were working, and their subordinates. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire survey results by all three provosts

confirmed their expressed desire to be of service to others, as well as being transformational leaders. The combined survey score average of all three provosts was 3.5 out of 4 when it came to the five I's—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation—of transformational leadership (Figure 4, Group ID 2 below).

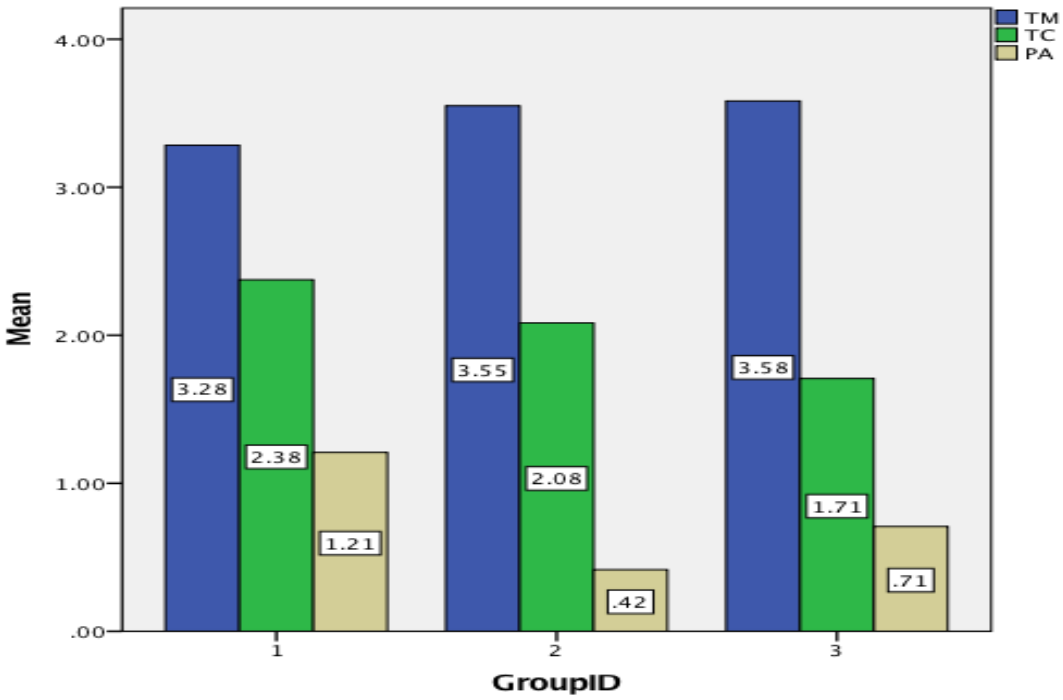

Figure 4. Provosts Results: Leadership style.

Figure 4 shows that Group 2, which is the provost level scored relatively high on TM and the lowest on PA, somewhat identical in terms of pattern with the president level. The survey shows that those who engage in this kind of collaboration are strong in TM, moderate in TC, and relatively low in PA. Survey results specifically showed a high score when it came to building trust among subordinates. According to the survey, provosts were fairly often, and almost frequently inspirational, motivational and influential. Equally high was a score on encouraging innovation, coaching, and developing subordinates into potential future leaders. Moreover, the average score when it came to values and beliefs, was around 3.3 out of 4. The provosts fairly often held values and beliefs in high regard.

The results also showed high average scores in relations to individual considerations—being both attentive, and caring to subordinates, as well as developing subordinates' strength and developing their capacity. In contrast, the results showed less attention paid to deviations and exceptions from standards. The average score in terms of focusing on targets, goals, and standards, was not as high as focusing on the people the provosts were responsible to lead, coach, empower, and help grow into leaders (Figure 5, Group ID 2 below).

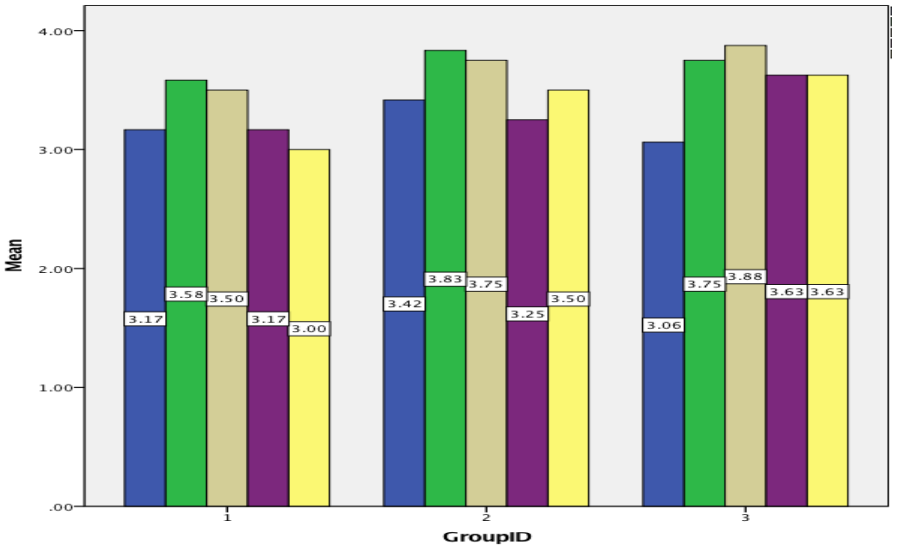

Figure 5. Provost Results: Relationships.

These results showed that for the three provosts who served more often, if not always, as role models to their followers, inspired and motivated their subordinates, showed concern when it came to the needs of others, whether that is their followers, or others, and encouraged innovation and creativity, focusing on those they led was a high priority, based on average scores. Being role models spoke to servant leadership, while inspiring and motivating spoke to both transformational and partly business leadership. Showing concern toward others' needs spoke to servant leadership, and encouraging innovation and creativity spoke to business leadership.

In addition to leadership qualities being important in terms of the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, decision-making, as well as purpose, were equally important. Data from the interview revealed that collaboration and communication played major roles. The memorandum of understanding document created by the steering committee, which was made up of each institution provosts, and other levels of leadership, confirmed the importance of communication and collaboration, and the role both played, especially at the very beginning of the partnership.

Moreover, the memorandum of understanding also confirmed that advancing the mission upon which each institution was created; combined to become the mission of the collective, was one of the important reasons why these provosts decided to join with their presidents, and others to create the multi-university partnership. Although mission was highlighted as being very important in the memorandum of understanding, the ability to reach sustainable levels financially, thus surviving to continue advancing their respective/collective mission, was equally important, because mission could not be achieved without financial strength.

In addition to mission, sustainability, and survivability, but mostly mission being of great importance at the provost level, relationships were equally important, because of the personal connections that each one of provosts felt to their respective institution, as well as the larger institution, which was the church under which each institution was created. The next section will cover data analysis at the third level of leadership, which included vice-presidents of various departments.

Third level of leadership analysis. This section will focus on third level of leadership analysis, which summary of findings are presented below (Table 8 below), as a brief reference point of the data.

Table 8

Third Level of Leadership Summary of Findings

Literature-derived key attributes			
Leadership	Decision-Making	Purpose	Emerging attributes
Data findings revealed that aspects all styles of leadership, as derived from the literature were used at the third level of leadership. However, the dominant styles according to collected data appeared to be servant and transformational leadership styles, with servant being the favored, which entailed leading, empowering, caring for others, building relationship, and coaching others into future leaders.	Decision-making centered around two key areas, which were communication, and collaboration, and data confirmed that these two areas were instrumental in helping with the creation, and support of the multi-university partnership. Collaboration at this level was even more important, because this group leaders were part of the "steering committee," which was charged with creating processes and ways of proceeding.	Collected data at the third level of leadership revealed that although sustainability and survivability played key roles in terms of decisions-made to join the partnership, the mission that each institution was advancing was the catalyst in the end. In addition to mission, changes within the operating environment had great influence as well. For this group of leaders, survivability and sustainability played as much a role in terms the decision, as did mission, even though mission edged both just a bit.	In addition to literature-based attributes, there were emerging ones at the third level of leadership, which included shared bond and beginning, having the same mission and vision, share a Christ-centered philosophy. In addition, social justice was seen as another emerging attributes, because of the diversity that online education creates, and also building a national brand and global community.

Leadership. At this level of analysis, the focus was on the tier level of leadership, which involved vice-presidents of enrollment, as well as student services and partnerships. The focus of the leadership at this level put an emphasis on people, which included the colleagues with whom they were collaborating, their respective subordinates, and well as executive leadership.

The analysis at the third level will be based on key attributes, which will be as follows: the first level of analysis will focus on leadership, which will include servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership. The second level will be on decision-making, which will include communication, and collaboration. The third level will focus on purpose, which will include mission, sustainability, and survivability.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership at the third level of leadership focused mostly on people as it was the case for the other two levels of leadership—the president and provost levels. More specifically, servant leadership centered on action taken, relationship built, and mission attainment. Leaders at the third level of leadership focused greatly on not only being able to serve others, they also focused on being able to take care of others, as well as helping their subordinates grow professionally. Briggs talked about helping subordinates grow in terms of "basically putting ourselves in the place of our staff to better understand them, and honestly better help them." Doing so seemed not only important because being a servant leader "demands it" as per Cunningham, it was equally important because of the "nature of what we do in terms of admission" said Highlander. According to her, admission "play an important role in terms of keeping the university in operations." Because of the nature of admission, it is important that staff morale and support is prioritized, which appeared to be implied in the views of these leaders.

According to Briggs, “Some of the things that I would want from my leaders I expect of myself.” In this sense, there is “no double standards in terms of how as a leader I would treat myself compare to how I would treat others” he continued. By not having double standards, a servant leader, in the opinion of Highlander, shows support to his or her subordinates by being a supportive leader both morally and professionally. “I know that the buck stops with me; therefore, I try to be the protector especially outward, I will fight for my staff.” Stated Highlander. By “fighting for my staff,” Highlander clarified that this meant both her being an advocate for her staff, as well as their mentor. Highlander implied that servant leaders were not only important, but that they were mentors, coaches, motivators, and advocates.

Based on the notion of not having double standards as a servant leader, Wilson focused more on relationship, and the ability of a servant leader to have good working relationship with both those they lead, and others. He stated that “in order to achieve mission, servant leadership has to be founded on collaboration and the ability to effectively work well with others.” This ability to partner with others in an efficient and effective way to drive mission required “self-sacrifice, an equal voice, and a team approach,” according to Wilson. For Cunningham, a servant leader is considered a “facilitator who works to elevate and empower others.” Both Wilson and Cunningham statements implied that it is a trait of a servant leader, and almost a duty or obligation to make others better by putting the needs of others first, meaning that a servant leader is a coach, a mentor, a facilitator, as stated by Highlander. Highlander, referred to her faith and the leader of her faith, as a good example of servant leadership. “He showed us the way to follow by selflessly giving his all so we can have life.”

Her example demonstrated that one of the ways to serve first and lead next was in the ability of a servant leader to bring others together, sometimes through self-sacrifice, and

sometimes through relationships. According to Briggs, a servant leader "projects a sense of collectiveness, as they have to look for synergy." Referencing synergy by using a personal example to demonstrate servant leadership, Wilson stated that "I am a person who is inherently optimistic and inherently looks for those types of synergies in any kind of business partnership, or relationship, or deal." For Cunningham, one of the traits of being a servant leader has to do with thinking not as an individual, but as a collective; "the sum of the parts is greater than each individual part, business partnership, or relationship or deal." His statement implied that a servant leader is one who serves everybody, and has a "very strong sense of community." Having a sense of community, which implied collaboration, synergy, is one of the distinct traits of effective servant leadership.

In order to achieve synergy and a collective sense of belonging, and operating, Briggs saw humility as being another key trait of servant leadership. He specifically spoke of humility in terms of inclusiveness and open-mindedness. According to him, humility is "the ability of a leader to allow for an environment that is participatory, where staff feel a sense of ownership in the decision-making process." He further stated that humility allows a servant leader to be open to advice, and makes any leader a good listener, because "that willingness to be vulnerable, and the willingness to listen to others and share in their wisdom, makes a servant leader a good listener."

What made listening a good trait of servant leadership, was the ability of a leader to "stay in tuned with both his or her surrounding, and subordinates." According to Briggs, "you are a servant leader when you are in tune with your organization, when you listen to people, when you allow people to have some authority, when you allow people to have some decision making." Briggs implied the importance of building relationship, which is key to a servant leader's

abilities to trust and "release power to his or her subordinates, which can be seen as transformational."

Transformational leadership. Being an inclusive leader transcends being of service to others, as inclusion requires for a leader to "have a vision, the ability and willingness to be adaptable, as well as being inclusive" as per Briggs, which steps also transform those around the leader. Inclusion in this sense leads to the ultimate focus of a transformational leader toward his or her followers' growth and development into transformational leaders themselves. Briggs further stated that "I feel like as a transformational leader, it is important for me to build the leadership strengths of the other people around me." The reason being partly to "make sure that the mission continues to be advanced, because it takes more than one leader to successfully carry out the mission" according to Briggs. This way of viewing leadership, and more specifically transformational leadership, is different from traditional leadership, as observed by Wilson, because where as in traditional leadership, "a leader holds most of the power; with a changing environment, we have to do things differently if we are going to be able to continue providing Christian education across the country" stated Wilson. And by leading in a different way, he meant to say, "being more transformational in ways which we proceed in terms of leading."

According to Wilson, the way to "do things in a non-traditional way is to be transformational, beginning with those around a leader." Highlander stated that "I want to raise up other leaders, and people that are passionate." Highlander further stated that:

> People have to find their motivation within, but we create a culture that is inspirational, transformational, and pull out some of those skills in folks. I want to raise up other leaders, and people that are passionate, people that are going on and doing what you are doing, who may not be in higher education. So, that is personal, I have talked about a

legacy as leader, and my legacy as a leader is that the people that have worked under my leadership, or around me, will go on in their own career and do great things, that to me is what transformational leadership is all about.

In Briggs' opinion, transformational leadership meant "seeking out the help of others," and in the word of Highlander, "a strong leader is really iron sharpening iron." Their statements implied that being transformational comes from the ability of leader to recognize that he or she does not know everything, and "work from a framework that you do not know everything and that there are very wise people, smart people with great ideas that surround you" in the opinion of Briggs. Along with understanding their limitations, transformational leaders "taps into the brain trust around his or her advisors, around his or her subordinates, and others around them" according to Wilson. They do so, because of their abilities as leaders to develop those around them into leaders themselves. This way of seeing leadership, in this case transformational leadership, is different from traditional leadership, which more often seems to elevate the leader as someone who may have all the answers, especially for "institutions with leaders who have been leading the same institution for decades" according to Wilson.

One of the ways through which transformational leaders improve and excel is in seeking out the help of others, especially mentors. Wilson stated that "I have asked, had a handful of people who have served as my mentors over the years." However, by seeking mentors, a transformational leader has to be open-minded to both positive and negative experiences, which is a great combination in terms of shaping them into "a good and successful leader" according to Wilson. To illustrate the need for mentors and role models, and their importance in shaping one's leadership skills, Wilson stated that "I have had both positive and negative examples that

have shaped my perspective on leadership." He further stated that, his successes can "be greatly attributed to those who helped mentor me, as well as guide me."

Good leaders do not get to be good without the support of their subordinates. According to Briggs, "good leaders get themselves in those positions because they have had a team help them get there. They have had people help them get there." It is based on this understanding of leadership that transformational leaders are "able to help transform those around them, because not only do they need others to be effective, but they need others to be driven in order to achieve mission and goals." This focus on others around a leader demonstrates the abilities of a transformational leader in terms of creating a sense of identity in subordinates, and recognizing, as well as understanding how subordinates fit within the mission. The implication being that the visionary aspect of transformational leadership, especially in an educational environment where change is constant, cannot be underestimated when it comes to impact on followers.

According to Wilson, "education is about change, and if you are not comfortable with change it is kind of difficult to progress, particularly in a fairly dynamic environment that ours is today." Therefore, not only is a transformational leader a "visionary" in the words of Highlander, they are also "adaptive and empowering," according to Cunningham. It is these combinations of key traits that reveal a successful transformational leader's ability to make followers feel better about following the leader. The ability to empower and have a vision is often based on a goal. In this case, goals are based on a business model, which leads to business leadership.

Business leadership. With the acknowledgement that their respective institutions were operating within a business setting, which included goals and outcomes to achieve, the ability of a leader to successfully operate within this setting is "as crucial, as the mission that they are

trying to advance, because without a business model, there is no mission to achieve" according to Briggs. Therefore, it is "important to understand the principals of business" in the words of Wilson, because "you are operating a business with specific outcomes," stated Highlander.

For leaders at the third level of leadership, revenue was a big aspect of business leadership, which fell under the category of having goals and reaching specific outcomes. Highlander stated that "I am super goal oriented in my role as a leader, I have a very strong fiduciary responsibility to the university and I take very seriously, that the revenue for the university is based on enrollment." And for Cunningham, "although we professed servant leadership for the most part, a servant leader is only as good as he or she is a business leader, because the two cannot be separated." He went further explaining the importance of enrollment, as it related to institution revenue, stating that "it is important, crucial to have a business model, and be business savvy as a leader, which means processes, goals, and standards, in order to succeed in keeping the university's bloodline flowing."

In addition to goals, standards and processes, collaboration appeared to be another key value for a business leader, especially at the provost level, because "a plan is only as good as a team that successfully collaborate to execute it" according to Briggs. And in the words of Cunningham, a good trait of a successful business leader has to do with the ability of a leader to "not only be able to collaborate, but to create a sense of success through collaboration." He further stated that "a good business leader has to build support among all people and make sure that people feel like it is a win-win." Cunningham seemed to focus more on the ability of a leader to create a sense of buy in from followers throughout the organization, which required both "cooperation and collaboration from those we lead" stated Briggs.

Moreover, given the nature of business, and the current ever-changing nature of higher education, part of business leadership involves "making harder, tougher business decisions" in the opinion of Highlander, which decisions are often rooted in business guiding principles. According to Wilson, there are many factors that influence a leader's decision, among which is a "reference point, which is part of a good business model. This is like a plan of action, which serves as a guide, and often facilitates even the toughest of decision." Speaking of a changing business environment, it appeared, at least from the views of provosts, that leadership tends to be situational as well.

Situational leadership. At the third level of leadership, there was not much to be said about situational leadership, because it was viewed for the most part as a "leadership style that is only impacted by a circumstance, or an event, or a situation" said Briggs. Situational leadership was viewed as being embedded within the other leadership style, because it caters to different circumstances, thus the situational part of it. According to Highlander, "if you are a servant leader, you may respond to a situation, but that does not change the fact that you remain a servant leader." In other words, a servant leader remains a servant leader who makes situation-based decisions. In this sense, situational leadership is viewed as a leadership style that incorporated other styles.

According to Wilson, situational leadership is "relating more to business leadership, because you are having to adapt to a new environment, or a new situation." Situational leadership spoke to the necessity, and ability of a leader to use circumstances or situations in order to be adaptable. Alongside the ability to lead came the requirement to make decision. This next section will cover the decision-making aspect of this multi-university partnership. This

section will specifically cover communication, and collaboration, which are two key attributes that emerged from the literature.

Decision-making. In addition to leadership, decision-making was important to the formation, and continued support of the multi-university partnership at the third level of leadership. The main focus in terms of decision-making focused on how communication was taking place at various levels, and how leaders at those levels of leadership collaborated to make sure that decisions that needed to be made were made accordingly and promptly.

Communication. Although decision-making at the third level of leadership involved a lot of back and forth communication, it was surprising listening to these leaders who themselves rarely touched on communication specifically, which was seen as, according to Biggs, "a normal way of operating, because we had to communicate." Highlander stated that communication "was not only important, but it was crucial in terms understanding each other, as our respective campus representatives, but also as a collective." It was clear that communication, whether face-to-face meetings, or via electronic means, "played an important role in terms of getting people on the same page" in the words of Highlander. Communication, which was constant, was crucial when it came to achieve the goals associated with the multi-university partnership, because it "remains an effective tool without which nothing can get done" stated Briggs. Communication was important to prepare both those who were going to affect change, and be affected by change, which in this case was the different processes, designs and rules that were going to impact how each institution involved operated.

It was not simply the ability to communicate that was important, but communication had to be "strategic, which was needed in order to make everything work. So, we had strategic president level meetings, which were ongoing, and then simultaneously, our steering committee

was also in constant contact to make sure we were keeping in touch, as we progressed," stated Wilson. According to Cunningham, it was even "more crucial to maintain constant communication at all levels of leadership, especially checking back with our respective departments, because they were developing and helping us implement the curriculum as we moved forward." Constant communication has to be consistent and continuing, because it was "the only way that she could stay on task, and do what we needed to get done in an efficient, consistent, and effective way" stated Highlander. However, in order for communication to be successful, collaboration had to be equally successful, because in the absence of collaboration, it was hard to communicate effectively, especially while there was constant, disruptive change.

Collaboration. At the third level of leadership, collaboration took on different forms, and was viewed through the lenses of several key factors, which included the importance of "working together as one entity," according to Briggs. Highlander stated that "carry out our collective, and individual institution's missions better if we bonded together." In the opinion of Cunningham, "there was this grand promise of what a unified University System could be if we worked together instead of competing. . .We could be bigger and better together." Leaders at this level implied synergy and its importance, as a key part of a successful collaboration, because for organizational change to be successful, in this case the formation of a multi-university partnership, "the ability to work together as different members from different institutions for the same cause, had to be a priority" according to Highlander.

Briggs acknowledged the importance of collaboration as an "antidote to competition that had been around for as long as the institutions have existed." He further stated that "with the advent of the partnership," it was the first time in his adult life that "we were able to look at each other as collaborators instead of competitors. And it was very refreshing, very enlightening."

He continued by stating that "I would say even downright heartwarming to finally look at another institution through the eyes of how can I help you succeed? Instead of, I am better than you, and we have more students than you, we have got more programs than you."

With the goal seemingly being to lessen competition and increase collaboration, in the words of Briggs, "this was now a golden opportunity for us to roll our sleeves up and say we are going to be collaborators, and we are going to help each other grow. We are not going to push each other down, we are going to help each other grow and lift each other up" he further stated. His statements once again appeared to focus more on the importance of synergy. Wilson referred to this desire from leaders at all three institutions to come together and collaborate instead of competing as "unifying under one banner, and helping us grow into a larger entity."

However, this seeming desire to collaborate did not come without any challenges. For the most part, there appeared to have been a bit of resistance from some lower level leaders within [Institutions A, B and C], who perceived the collaboration as being "one-sided" in the words of Highlander, and "disruptive" in the words of Wilson. Disruption was somewhat expected, because as organizations go through change, there is always resistance, which is often due to there being "newer processes and procedures being implemented to alter familiar ways of doing things, which can create discomfort," according to Briggs.

He further stated that "[Institution C] joined because we were helping them with their finances, teaching them how to do their financial aid, we were helping them get courses online, we were helping them operate their LMS, and we were doing a host of things for them." Moreover, "we were doing almost as many for [Institution B]. So, it was interesting to see that spread in grades because that was a direct sign of [Institution C] really growing by being part of this partnership, and the experience they received and valued. [Institution B] did too."

Furthermore, “and for us, [Institution A], we felt we have been doing it, we were not really learning much, we were giving more resources away than we were getting back, knowing that we were going to get it back down the road,” Briggs stated.

For Wilson, the process of collaboration was “much less collaborative than at least one of our partners would have liked.” He clarified his point by stating that he meant to say that “we were not successfully working together as one group, with one voice.” It was rather visible according to Wilson, that Institution A having been the initiator of the partnership, “held much more power, and was coming into the partnership from a position of advantage.” He clarified by saying that “most of the time we had meetings and the meetings were held at [Institution A] location. [Institution A] really took over almost all of the infrastructural components of running the program. And you know, there was an effort to, again, do things collaboratively as much as I think they could, but it really was not as much of a true collaboration.”

For Briggs, Wilson, and Highlander, the financial levels between the three institutions were just too different to ignore their impact on the process. According to Wilson, “I think because of the nature of the relationship, you had [Institutions B and C] receiving resources including money from [Institution A], and I think because of that, there was feeling of an obligation to defer on leadership from both [Institution B and C to Institution A]. In this sense, it was probably less collaborative than it could have been.” Although decision-making was important to the formation of the multi-university partnership, equally important was the purpose. This next section will discuss the purpose of joining the multi-university partnership from the point of view of leaders at the third level of leadership.

Purpose. At the third level of leadership, purpose for wanting to join the multi-university partnership mainly focused on three key areas as far as leadership was concerned. It is worth

mentioning that the three areas were intertwined. They focused primarily on financial needs to survive on one side, to sustainability on the other, and most of it revolved around advancing the mission of each institution, which to some leaders was not just a 'Christ-centered mission" as stated by Highlander, but "spreading the kingdom of God," according Wilson. At this level of leadership, purpose combined to focus on leading change.

Mission. Survival, which was tied to revenue and finances, focused on the realities of current higher education environment, especially for private institutions, which Highlander stated that "a core of non-profit private universities is facing a financial hardship. And the fact is that we have to do things differently if we are going to be able to continue providing Christian education across the country." Part of doing things in a different way had to do with moving into online education as Highlander further stated, "online education is going to happen. Schools are going to do it. Why not us? Because we can spread Christ story and plant those seeds." She went on to say that "if we do not do it, somebody who is not going to plant the values of Christian education, and I do not mean the values of Christian, I mean the values of Christ, will do it." Highlander statement showed the desire to lead change and not become its victim, at least from the point of view of a faith-based, higher education institution.

Furthermore, Highlander continued by stating that "if we are really serious about being a Christian university, preparing leaders to impact society, then we should not stay in our little hole. We should be bold, and we should provide this education so people can experience Christ for themselves through our faculty, and through the curriculum." According to Wilson, the multi-university partnership provided an opportunity to "reach more people, and to share Christ with more people through the classroom, through our personal relationships, and this kind of partnership offered an opportunity to really expand our reach."

Sustainability. However, it was not just the opportunity to expand the reach, it was also a financial reality, according to these leaders. Wilson stated that "the most significant factor in drawing our [Institution, C], into the partnership was simply a financial one." Briggs stated that the purpose was to create an opportunity for all institutions in the partnership to work together, to have enough of a financial cushion, so "they could then sustain themselves well into the twenty-first century."

Highlander referenced revenue as being the primary driver, by stating that "I know the number one driving priority was revenue. For [Institution C] it was really about survival." Her point was echoed by Wilson who stated that "I have no doubt that we got into this primarily for survival reasons, because we were hurting financially." According to Highlander, "we are still supporting [Institution C] through additional consulting. [Institution B] is in the same boat. For [Institution A], we did not need this revenue. It was more mission driven and focused for us."

According to both Briggs and Cunningham, if the partnership was totally about mission, it could have been done years ago. It was not totally about mission, which was why it was now happening. Highlander stated that "if it was really about mission, 100% like that was the core, we would have done something like this years ago. She further stated that "the issue about higher education, and this is not a critical statement, the issue is real and alive in higher education for private schools, we are going to see them dropping like flies . . . the political answer would always be with mission first, and the church and then the finances, but I think that the catalyst to everyone working so hard to work together is based on the reality of higher education today." The reality that Highlander was referencing, was the expressed negative impact of constant change that these leaders were noticing in higher education.

Survivability. Wilson stated that:

> I think on [Institution A's] end, if you were to put it on a scale with financial on one end and mission on the other, it was almost entirely mission driven. In our own instance I believe that our president was driven entirely by financial considerations. For [Institution B], my sense from a distance is that there were much more financial considerations than anything there." On his part, Cunningham recognized the financial influence on the decision to join the partnership by stating that "it seems that financial reasons were a primary driver for the decisions. I know for sure that we were running on very tight margins on our campus, and probably even tighter margins on the [Institution C] campus. We wanted to go from a surviving institution to a thriving institution.

Alongside the need to be financially sound, and be able to sustain operations, the role of mission could not be disregarded, because "it was out mission that was driving what we were doing" stated Highlander. "The reality of higher education and small private institutions is that if we want to continue seeing Christian education in our states, we are going to have to do things differently because we cannot just rely on traditional freshman enrollment" according to Highlander. She went further stating that "it is changing, it continues to change. And so, this is an opportunity for us to continually fulfill the calling as an institution that we have with our traditional population. So, I felt very passionate that our ability to do this together was so much stronger than if we did it just alone." Furthermore, Highlander stated that "if we are going to overcome these challenges and survive, we need each other."

In addition, the above discussed key attributes that emerged from the literature, there were other emerging attributes that came out of the data, from the third level of leadership. In addition to a priori codes, key attributes that emerged from the literature, there were emerging attributes at the third level of leadership, which included helping a declining church, shared faith,

personal connections, and a desire to grow. This next section will cover those emerging attributes in detail.

Emerging attributes. In addition to key attributes—mission, sustainability, and survivability—there were additional, emerging attributes at the third level of leadership, which included working to help the church, a history of shared faith, personal connections at the highest level of each organization, as well as the desire to see the growth of the larger institution. As Briggs stated, "I think number one was the fact that we were all united by our faith, which was key. The fact that we were all likeminded in terms of this could be a very good partnership to ensure the growth of the church in the form of higher education outreach." He further stated that "it is hard to take any three schools across the country, and say hey you guys want to be partners? Well, you could maybe find some common ground but it is far easier to find common ground when you have the same mission and vision."

The shared mission spoke to the similarities in all three institutions mission, which could be found on various documents, including their webpages. Among the key themes that were clear when it came to their combined mission statements, words like Christian, transforming society, service to others, and Christ-centered were prominent. And above all else, being of service to others, whether students, faculty, immediate community, society at large, and even the global community, appeared to be an important aspect of what these institutions stand for, and a catalyst as far as their combined mission statements was concerned. However, it was not simply being of service to others, as it was carrying out this task in a Christ-centered manner, because their combined mission statements reflected a Christ-centered philosophy.

And to this point about shared faith and mission, Cunningham referenced their shared historic background, as a unifying factor that enabled the formation of the multi-university

partnership by stating that “we have a common bond of faith and originally were all started for the same purpose, and so there is this strong sort of yearning to maintain that in some ways.” The goal was working together to be successful as academic institutions, but also working together to “help the church, while building a national brand,” according to Briggs. Cunningham idea of “shared bond and beginning” can be found on online documents, which referenced the creation of each institution.

The examination of online documents available through each institution website revealed a great deal of similar beginning. The first one to have been founded was [Institution C], and thereafter, [Institution B] was founded several years later, while [Institution A] was founded a decade after [Institution B]. Not only were these three institutions founded a decade or two of each other, but they were all founded in response to rising need within the larger institution that founded them. Moreover, they were founded specifically for a teaching purpose and had a focus on the same group of students.

Part of maintaining and strengthening this shared bond was seen through both their abilities as a multi-university partnership to move into the online market, in order to reach additional students, which move also served to fulfil what Highlander called the “social justice goal.” According to Highlander, “with online education, we have seen some phenomenal statistics in students of color, and in fact, there have been certain periods of time where our students of color are at a higher percentage than our Caucasian students. That is a dream come true, that is a vision for me.” She further stated that “social justice, being able to offer education at that level and some of the feedback we have had is that students who might not have felt comfortable coming to this campus are comfortable going into a virtual campus”

However, the goal was not just reaching out to additional, diverse students, it was to equally make sure "they are reached and trained to continue the mission," in the words of Wilson, which mission was to "be of service to the church, and community through a Christ-centered education" in the words of Highlander. According to Wilson, education has "been used to share Christ, which is what some of the institutions were behind the formation of this partnership." Wilson view was supported by online documents found on the Online University System site, which in summary, focused on training students through a Christian education, into future leaders, and preparing them to be of service to others. Wilson further stated that,

> We are very focused on using education as a tool for sharing Christ with people, as well as training people. We all have very similar language in our mission statements, and I think we use it time and again when we teach. But this is about preparing young men and women for lives of service. You serve God, do service to others . . . I think one of the things you hear from all of the other institutions is that while the church is declining in numbers, our institutions are growing in numbers. We are the arm of the church that is working.

Highlander on her part, referenced students by stating that the aim was to "improve across the country the number of students coming to our institutions." She continued by stating that "we see the population of high school students in our faith going down. Is there anything as institutions we can do together to influence that and bring that up? So, from a high level I do not think the larger institution was pushing it, from the operational level I think we were excited about it as a church."

For Briggs, the other goal was to "both build and market our brand at the national level." According to Cunningham, in order to give the brand a national prominence, the schools through

their respective leadership had to "find common ground by finding things to build on, and finding a way to unify the three schools around the core values especially around faith." Cunningham further stated that "this whole better together we could be a big player, maybe the biggest player at the national level" was an important unifying point.

It appeared that the common ground was to be found in shared faith, values, and culture. "This was a group of presidents who were not only very much likeminded and good businessmen, but they also shared faith, they also shared those same values, those collective values that we are brothers in the faith" Cunningham stated. According to Briggs, "here is something we can do in unison together. So, the fact that they shared the same religious, cultural, and spiritual values, I think played a key role." In addition to shared values, Cunningham referred to their collaboration as also being based on care by stating that "here are presidents of the institutions who have been very collegial with each other, they care about each other's institutions, and they do feel like they are on the same team in some regards."

Briggs went even further stressing the importance of shared faith and values at the leadership level, in a broader way, because it was not just at the presidents' level that collaboration and work was being done to form this multi-university partnership, but it was happening at all levels of leadership involved in its initial planning, support, and execution, at all three institutions involved. Briggs stated:

> Without a doubt that was a very big part of solidifying the partnership because we all, meaning, those of us in leadership positions, we all went to same faith schools, and universities. We had that culture of having grown up in the same faith church. So, that same faith bent, especially our faith emphasis on education in general, and in this particular case in higher education, we have always espoused education. And we have

always built schools before we built churches. So, that has been part of our lifeblood. So that certainly did help. There were some people of course in the lower rank and file who were not of our faith, but they certainly were Christian and anyone who professes Christ has that same ethos of, you know we are brothers and sisters in the faith and we pull together to support each other, and build each other up rather than try to undercut each other, or stab somebody in the back, or things of that nature. When you can work in that kind of environment, it is very freeing for you to try new things. And you know if you take a misstep, people are going to help you get up rather than kick you down.

Furthermore, Briggs stressed the importance of understanding what he viewed as the call to serve, touching on the idea he had stressed many times before, that being of service to others was crucial, as well as the impact of the work that was being done through their individual campus, which was ultimately going to be transferred to the multi-university partnership, and how unique to their faith it was. He stated:

> The church, not our specific church, our faith-based perspective in general, the concept of, we just spoke about mission, the fact that we believe we are called to serve, we do it in a very unique way by serving higher education students, undergraduates, graduates—that is how we choose to serve, and we want those servants to get in touch with the best education possible, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, that did play a role, that belief, that culture again played a role in getting us together because we want to strengthen each other . . . we could serve a larger body of Christ, by doing this kind of a partnership.

Summary. Data analysis at the third level of leadership revealed the crucial role that leadership, not just at this level, but overall, played when it came to the formation of the multi-university partnership, and its continued support. Decisions were driven and executed by the

leadership involved in the formation of this partnership, leadership which included presidents, provosts, and other vice-presidents—third level of leadership—from all three institutions. A combination of leadership styles, which included servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership, were used by each individual vice-president (VP) in terms of decision-making as it related to joining the multi-university partnership. And although a combination of styles was used, servant leadership, as expressed by these leaders, was the dominant, and preferred style of leading at the third level of leadership.

At the third level of leadership, servant leadership greatly focused on people, and more specifically on those around the leaders, which included their subordinates, faculty members, and students. Servant leadership for the four vice-presidents manifested in the form of how they viewed their duties as leader in service to others. They viewed their duties through the lens of being caring toward their staff, empowering those their supervised, being coaches in their roles, focusing on institutional mission of creating other leaders who will carry the mission forward. And the biggest reference in terms of how they viewed their styles was the mission guiding institutions where they are part of the leadership. And their references reflected the exact style they professed.

Among the key themes that were clear when it came to their combined mission statements, words like Christian, transforming society, service to others, and Christ-centered were prominent. And above all else, being of service to others, whether students, faculty, immediate community, society at large, and even the global community, appeared to be an important aspect of what these institutions stand for, and a catalyst as far as their combined mission statements was concerned. However, it was not simply being of service to others, as it

was carrying out this task in a Christ-centered manner, because their combined mission statements reflected a Christ-centered philosophy.

In addition to the above stated combined summary of their individual mission statements being a confirmation as far as documents are concerned of their commitment to servant leadership, additional documents through the Online University System also confirmed servant leadership as foundational, especially as they focus on the formation and preparation of individual leaders to have an impact at the congregation level, as well as both at the community and global levels.

In addition, documents relating to institutional vision also referenced the importance of being of service to others. Vision statements from all three institutions' sites equally focused on being of service to others, as well as transformational. [Institution A] focused on serving a diverse, global community of students and preparing future leaders through a Christ-centered education, so, they can have a transformative impact on society, through educational experiences that are grounded in relationships and centered in servant leadership. For [Institution B], the vision, which is founded on Christian principles, focused on service, and specifically to help educate students who are future church and world leaders, strengthen their own identities and make successful impact on society. [Institution C] focused their attention on engaging students who are future leaders, both in their immediate and global communities, through a Christ-centered, value-oriented, liberal arts education.

Some of the leadership traits expressed by VPs at the third level of leadership, as they related to the various leadership styles included their abilities to not only care and serve others, but to empower, coach and guide others, as part of both servant and transformational leadership. Furthermore, relationship played an important role in terms of achieving the goals and mission of

the multi-university partnership, both as it related to these VPs relationship to their respective superiors, and colleagues with whom they were working, and their subordinates. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire survey results by all four VPs confirmed their expressed desire to be of service to others, as well as being transformational leaders. The combined survey score average of all three provost was 3.5 out of 4 when it came to the five I's—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation—of transformational leadership (Figure 6, Group ID 3 below).

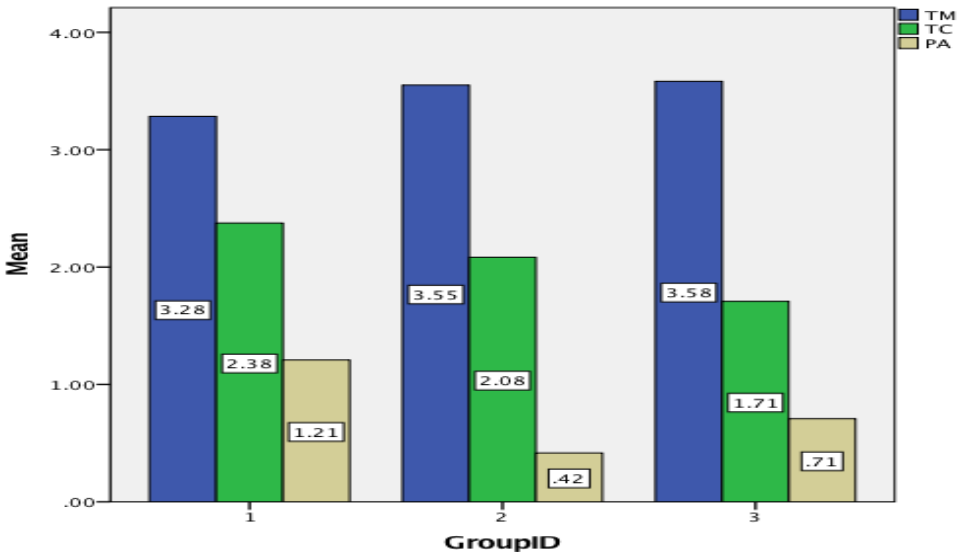

Figure 6. Third level of leadership: Service and transformational.

The graph shows that Group 3, which is the third level of leadership scored relatively high on TM and the lowest on PA, somewhat identical in terms of pattern with both the president and provost levels. The survey shows that those who engage in this kind of collaboration are strong in TM, moderate in TC, and relatively low in PA. The combined survey at the third level of leadership showed a high score for these vice-presidents (VPs) when it came to building trust, specifically among subordinates. According to the score, VPs were fairly often, and almost frequently inspirational, motivational and influential in the way that they related to those they led (Figure 7, Group ID 3 below).

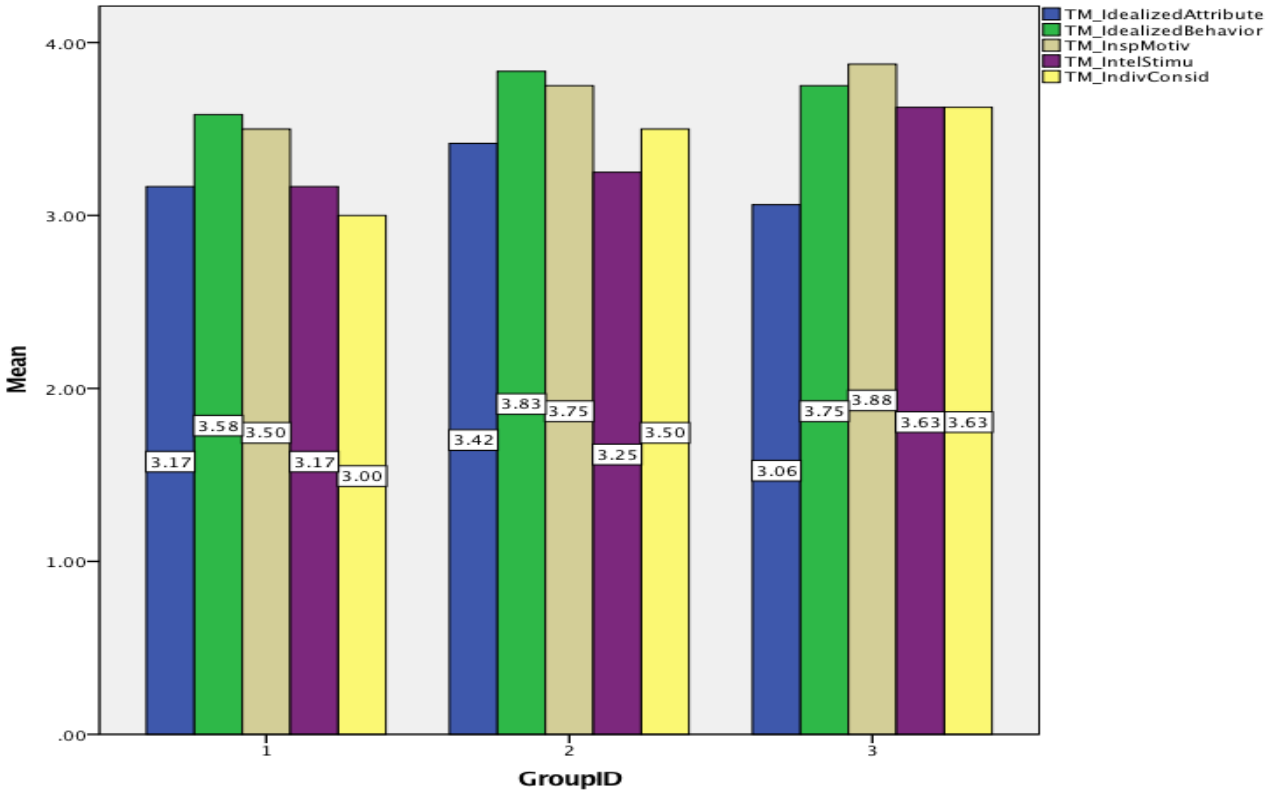

Figure 7. Third level of leadership: Building trust.

Another high score was observed in terms of their ability to encourage innovation, coaching, and developing subordinates into potential future leaders. Their combined score showed that VPs fairly often perceived themselves as coaches and teachers for others.

When it came to values and beliefs, there was also a high average score at the third level of leadership, which showed that VPs fairly often held values and beliefs in high regard, both for themselves and as they related to their subordinates. These values and beliefs, which were expressed in interview data, as well as data found online were centered on Christian principles based on their faith-based philosophy.

Another category that resulted in higher scores was in relation to individual considerations in terms of these VPs being both attentive, and caring to subordinates' needs and aspirations. Equally high, was the average score around developing their subordinates' strength

and capacity. Included in the focus for individual considerations was the ability of VPs to help subordinates have a strong sense of mission. This was another key area of mission focused strength for the VPs, and showed the high level of attention that they placed on mission based on both interviews documents analysis data. Survey results around standards, performance, and targets, all of which related to transactional (business) leadership based on data collected from the literature, showed a low average score. The average score revealed that focusing on targets, goals, and standards, was not as high for the VPs, as was paying extra attention to the people the VPs were responsible to lead, coach, empower, and help grow.

This average score spoke to the fact that the VPs often, if not always use the key components of the five I's. Moreover, these results suggested that the four VPs served more often, if not always as role models to their followers, inspired and motivated their subordinates, showed concern when it came to the needs of others, and encouraged innovation and creativity.

In addition to leadership qualities being important in terms of the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, decision-making, as well as purpose, were equally important. Data from the interview revealed that communication and collaboration played major roles. The memorandum of understanding document created by the steering committee, which was made up of each institution VPs, and other levels of leadership, confirmed the importance of communication and collaboration, and the role both played, especially at the very beginning of the partnership.

Furthermore, the memorandum of understanding also confirmed that advancing the mission upon which each institution was created; combined to become the mission of the collective, was one of the most important reasons why these leaders decided to join with their presidents, and provosts in order to create the multi-university partnership. Although mission

was highlighted as being very important in the memorandum of understanding, the ability to reach sustainable financial levels, thus surviving to continue advancing their respective/collective mission, was equally important, because mission could not be achieved without financial strength.

In addition to mission, sustainability, and survivability, but mostly mission being of great importance at the third level and leadership, relationships were equally important, because of the personal connections that each one of VPs felt toward their respective institution, as well as the larger institution, which was the church under which each institution was created. Additional emerging themes that were equally important at the third level of leaders included social justice, and helping a declining. In terms of helping a declining church, documents examined primarily from the Online University system appeared to acknowledge this by stating that "did you know that 90 percent of churches are declining or on a plateau in worship attendance?"

Analysis Results

Looking at data analysis from all three levels of leadership—presidents, provosts, and third level of leadership, clear, common themes emerged, which can be categorized into two—leadership traits, and factors. A combination of these traits and factors were instrumental in helping leaders at all levels, make decisions related to joining the multi-university partnership. This presentation of results will therefore be categorized and presented as follow: the first category will summarize traits that emerged from all levels of leadership analysis, and the second category will summarize main factors that emerged from all levels of analysis.

Leadership traits. A review of key attributes across all levels of leadership revealed common leadership traits which helped lead involved leaders at the president, provost, and third level of leadership to come together, and work on the formation of the multi-university

partnership. These traits appeared to center on people; they centered around the ability of each one of these leaders to build relationship with both his or her subordinates, as well as other leaders through involved empowerment, care, effective communication, and collaboration (Bar graph 8 below). Building relationship across the board was key to both the success of individual institutions, as well as the success of the multi-university partnership they created. Figure 8 below showed that the most effort by these leaders focused on integrity, productivity, and encouraging others, all of which focus on people. And the least amount of effort focused on other aspects of leadership, which did not necessarily focus on people specifically.

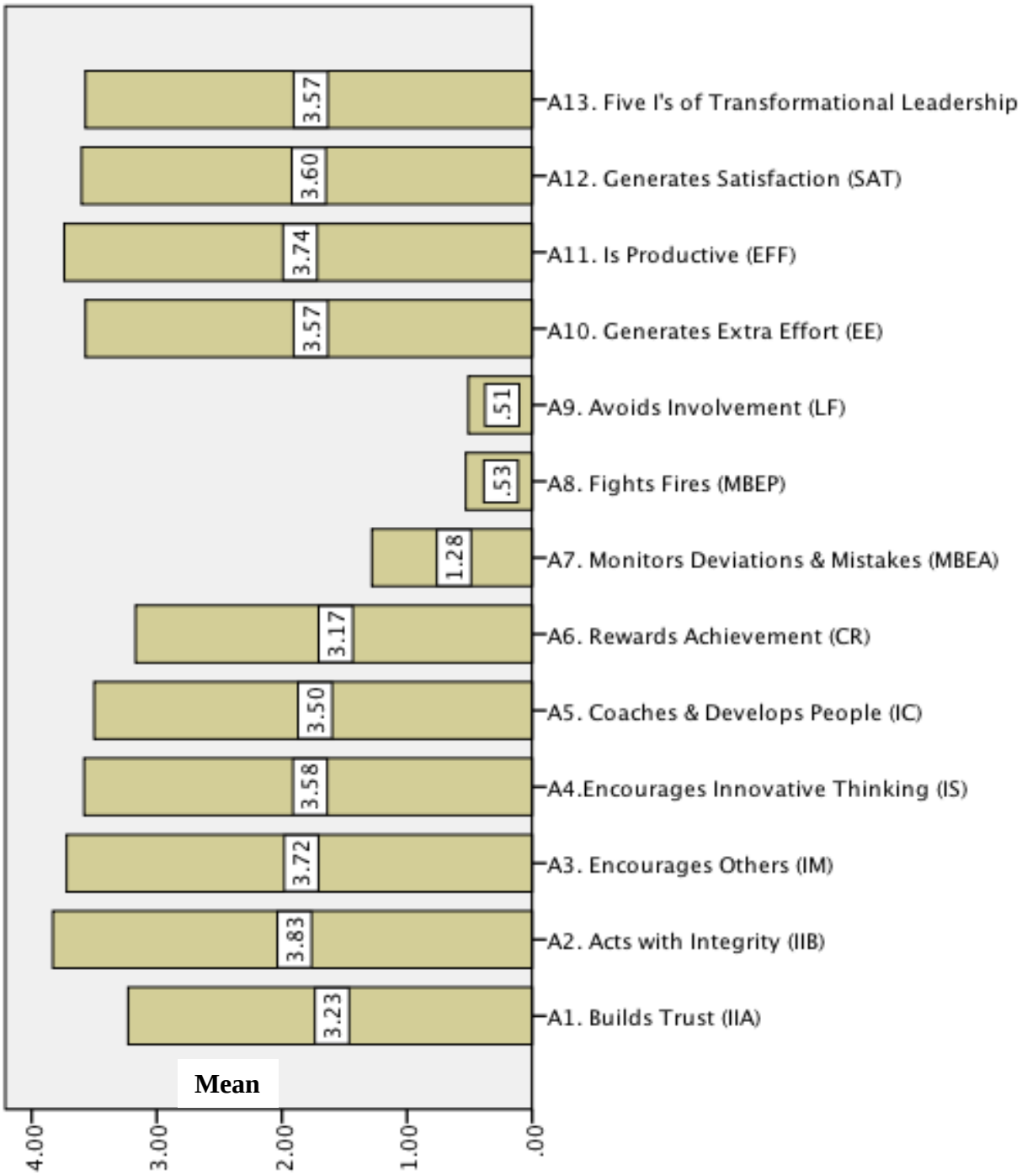

Figure 8. Leadership focus on integrity, productivity, and encouragement.

Leadership. The most important aspect of this partnership was leadership, because everything that was accomplished from initial conversations, to the creation of the steering committee, and to the execution of the initial phases of the multi-university partnership, were all

organized, and executed from the leadership down to staff, and others who were involved at various levels. It was the ability of those involved in the planning and ultimate execution of the multi-university partnership, who were also already holding key positions of leadership within their respective organizations, to rise to the opportunity presented, and be of service, transformational and exemplary leaders.

The process that took place in terms of the formation, and continued support of the multi-university partnership could be characterized as organizational change, because there were management processes, curriculum, financial, recruitment changes that took place to allow for a better coordination, and execution in terms of implementing the necessary programs, as per Freeman. Moreover, because of the number of institutions involved in this process of organizational change, and the adjustments that had to take place at each institution level of operating, this process could also be characterized, or referred to as multiple organizational changes. This was because changes that too place did not just affect one institution, but all three institutions involved.

And as such, leadership, according to Briggs, at each institution had to, and played a critical role, because "we were all the catalysts to not only making this partnership happen, but assure its continued success as well" stated Mash. Pack referred to leaders involved in making sure this multi-university partnership happens, as being "gate openers and keepers" because of the "power and responsibility bestowed upon us to make sure decisions, hard decisions, which sometimes succeed, and sometimes do not, are made." Although Pack acknowledged how challenging it was being one of the many leaders involved in the decision-making process, he also applauded the "leadership quality of those that we had in place who helped make the partnership a reality." According to Cunningham, "if it was not for the good, servant leaders,

who were also visionary that we had in place, at all three institutions, it would have been hard bringing every together." On his part, Wilson applauded the leadership show by [Institution A] president by stating that "it all happened because of his vision and desire to help other institutions within the same system."

One of the key traits manifested by the leaders involved in this process of forming the multi-university partnership, from the president level, to the provost, and third level of leadership, was the ability to lead. And by leading, leaders expressed confidence in each other when it came to how guidance, and support was provided. Whether through using servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership, or a combination, one thing was clear throughout; those charged with leading this multi-university partnership, especially at the president level, did a lot of guiding and directing to make sure the goal was being attained. "I felt confident in the ability of our three presidents working together selflessly to see the success of this partnership" stated Briggs. Highlander stated that "At the very beginning of the partnership, I was invited by our president to present the vision of the partnership to the entire group, as envisioned by our president whose vision it was, and that was empowering."

What made these leaders effective in how they led the formation of this partnership, was because of their abilities to empower, care, effectively communicate, collaborate, and their abilities to build relationship with both their subordinates, and other involved leaders from the other institutions involved. According to Mash, "we cared about one another beyond the fact that we were doing business. There was a deep connection among us, this is me speaking at the president level, because we knew each other and had a great relationship." Freeman also to the relationship that existed between the three presidents by stating that "it helped knowing each other as part of the same faith." And Pack brought up the length of service as being an important

aspect of this leadership by stating that "we have worked together for a while, and have each served our individual institutions for several years, so that did help."

Empowerment. In addition to the ability to lead, empowerment was another key trait that emerged, especially when it came to decision-making. According to Highlander, empowerment by all three presidents, and the leadership in general, was "key" as in "a key factor" in terms of making the process move along, and get all those involved in the decision-making process move in the direction of forming, and sustaining the multi-university partnership. Although a key component of transformational leadership, empowerment, which took various forms across the different leadership styles, was an important aspect of leadership, as perceived by leaders at all levels of leadership.

As Freeman stated "a leader's ability to empowerment others is key to making change happen. Empowerment turned leaders into change agents. According to Rivers, "our president who is more often personally involved in matters that impact our institution, appeared confident enough to allow most of the decisions made, often without his presence." Asked why this was the case, Cunningham referenced the "power that the steering committee, of which all of us, except the presidents were part of, was given." Cunningham's point was also confirmed by Highlander who stated that "the steering committee was a driving force in terms of decision-making power." And according to Briggs, "most of the decisions were made by the steering committee, and more often, all we did was make suggestions to our individual presidents, but they had empowered the committee, because of the trust they had in us."

Empowerment did not just happen at the president level, in terms of their abilities to empower their subordinates, but empowerment happened across the various leadership levels, which included the president level, provost level, third level of leadership, and into the deans'

levels at each institution. As stated by Bridges, empowerment happened in the form of the ability of a leader to "value what each person is bringing to the discussion. . . by regarding them as another leader and not just a subordinate," a catalyst for success. Rivers stated that "because our deans were making decisions about curriculum, just as much as we were empowered by our president, at least for me, I had to empower them to make those decisions, because they were implementing those changes, and therefore were in a better position to make those decisions."

According to Dawkins, empowerment, especially when it came to decision-making, "allowed for quick turn around on key decisions, because we knew that the presidents, at least for me, I knew that president Freeman was behind us, and trusted us enough to let us make those crucial decisions, because he knew we were making them in the best interest of the mission we shared." On his part, Freeman stated that "you have to make sure you have the right people in the right positions." Asked why, he continued by stating that "it made decision-making easier, and often much more impactful, because you have an empowered team that can help you make the right decision."

Although there was oversight, it appeared that at every level of leadership, it was important that those making recommendations, and often decisions, felt empowered to make some of those decisions. Therefore, the creation of the steering committee, which drove most of the decisions, in the words of Briggs, was "the best way to proceed in my view, because that committee facilitated so much." Cunningham stated that it was "fulfilling to know that the steering committee was empowered not just to make recommendations on key decisions, but also able to make some of those decisions with the full backing of the highest level of authority." By the highest level of authority, he meant at the president level. Empowerment was equally

appreciated by Dawkins, who appreciated the "hands off approach of our president when it came to some key decisions."

Care. The ability of leaders to care for one another, and also those with whom they were working, was another key trait that was "needed, and necessary to make this whole process of creating this partnership work" according to Wilson. Caring for others thereby accomplishing part of the mission was very important to all three presidents. Pack called their ability to care "one of our key values, one of our core values." Caring required some level of selflessness according to Mash, because the attention was turned toward others, in terms of prioritizing the well-being and success of others. "Each one of us needed to care enough in order to give and take." Wilson stated that "the best example of care could be seen in what Freeman did in terms of being both a visionary, and providing a tremendous amount of resources to our other two institutions, so that we could achieve this goal." And according to Cunningham, "if people did not care enough, especially at the president level, we would not even be talking about this."

Mash referred to this level of caring as "a leader not wanting to be in the spotlight, but rather allowing other to shine, because this meant a lot for all of us." Caring did cut across all levels of leadership, and was not particular to one specific leadership style. It appeared to have been a strong part of service. Highlander stated that "you cannot be a good servant if you do not care." Therefore, it seemed to have been the ability of leaders at all levels, but mostly at the president level, not claiming the spotlight that was instrumental in terms of caring and prioritizing others, and their needs when it came to the multi-university partnership, as already stated by Mash.

Wilson spoke greatly to the care that was demonstrated by one leader in particular, which ability to care for 'others in the same system" was "instrumental in making others buy into the

vision for the partnership." However, the ability to care did not seem to be a trait of any particular leadership style, but did cut across the different styles of leadership, and was seen as being a key component of leadership, especially when it came to form the multi-university partnership. As stated by Cunningham, "one of the key trait that cut across all leadership levels was the amount of care that leaders, especially at the president's level showed toward each other." He further stated that "here are presidents of the institutions who have been very collegial with each other, they care about each other's institution, and they do feel like they are on the same team in some regards."

Both Wilson and Cunningham spoke about the amount of care that one particular leader had, a leader who was willing to "provide extra help to see the partnership succeed" according to Cunningham. "I believe [Institution A president] really, truly wanted to get a couple of partnering institutions up and running and that is exactly what happened" stated Wilson. However, it was not just this president's willingness to support the creation of the multi-university partnership, according to Wilson, this president cared enough to be willing to offer a great amount of resources to help the other two institutions be up to par, as far as operational standards were concerned."

All across the leadership levels, it was apparent that leaders involved in planning and executing the multi-university partnership cared about each other both at a personal and professional levels, because "of the shared values and faith, which made this an unusual partnership, since we were working with people that we were familiar with," as per Briggs. At the institutional level, the same support was manifested given "the fact that our beginnings are similar, because we were founded by the same larger institution" stated by Mash. Furthermore, the leaders cared enough to want to "finally put into action an idea that had been for decades, as

created by our University Systems, but was only on paper" in the words of Briggs. They cared enough about each other that they recognize the competition that had existed among their individual institutions for so long, and were "willing to see that cease, so we could work together, because together we were better and stronger" according to Pack. According to Briggs, "it was the first time in my adult life that we had gotten together, and said, let's collaborate other than compete... the first time that we could look each other in the eye, as partners and not competitors."

However, although there was a great deal of care at all levels of leadership, this did not automatically mean that there were not concerned and challenges. According to Wilson, "[Institution A] was providing a lot for [both B and C] in terms of financial and personnel support, that I am sure it was concerning to some." Briggs recognized the concerns expressed by Wilson by stating that "there were some of our lower level leaders who had great concerns that we were giving away more resources than we were actually getting back." However, it appeared that these leaders were able to convince those who were concerned about the importance of the partnership, and how the investment would be recouped. According to Freeman, "although we were giving more resources than we were getting back, our goal was in the long run, because once we would start making profits, then no one would care about the expenses we had made."

Relationship. The ability to not only build, but to also maintain relationships was not key traits expressed by leaders in terms of its impact on the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. This was because "prior and current relationships that we were being built were cornerstone to how we proceeded" as per Highlander. It appeared that the very idea of creating this particular partnership was based on already existing relationships both at the leaders' personal and professional levels. According to Cunningham, "here are presidents of the

institutions who have been very collegial with each other, they care about each other's institutions, and they do feel like they are on the same team in some regards." Mash, called the relationship at the president level as being "very good, because even before the idea of this partnership coming up, the three of us were in constant communication . . . we knew about each other's institution, and shared about challenges and successes, because though worded a bit differently, our missions are very similar."

And by reviewing both mission, and history of each institution, it became clear how important the existing relationship at the highest leadership level of each institution, as well as relationships that were being created along the way, as new leaders were added to the committee, played an important role in the initial phases of the partnership, as well as during the time it was being executed. As expressed by most of the leaders involved in the process, there was a history of shared faith, values and mission that could not be ignored. It appeared that mission was foundational when it came to how these leaders related to each, because they saw themselves as "being on the same mission" according to Briggs. Given the importance of a share mission, a quick review of each institution mission, and history, and it became clear that this relationship that was being nurtured went beyond this particular partnership.

Among the key themes that were clear when it came to their combined mission statements, words like Christian, transforming society, service to others, and Christ-centered were prominent. And above all else, being of service to others, whether students, faculty, immediate community, society at large, and even the global community, appeared to be an important aspect of what these institutions stand for, and a catalyst as far as their combined mission statements was concerned. However, it was not simply being of service to others, as it

was carrying out this task in a Christ-centered manner, because their combined mission statements reflected a Christ-centered philosophy.

In terms of history, although created at various times, they still were created by the same umbrella entity. There appeared to be a couple of decades between the founding of all three institutions. However, the motivation behind their creation remained the same, and so was the mission. All three institutions, based on available data online, appeared to have been founded in response to a rising need within the church, which was spreading across various locations. Initially, all three institutions focused on the same population as their target, with the goal to develop leaders who would go on to be of service to others, both in their immediate and global communities.

Communication. Communication played a key role from the very beginning of the partnership, in the form of regular meetings that took place at all levels of the leadership, before, during and after the initial phases of the multi-university partnership. According to Freeman, "it was important that there was constant communication, which took all sorts of forms, to make sure that we were staying focus." For Mash, "in the beginning, we were in very regular communication, I would say on a weekly basis, because the idea was just getting off the ground, and at the highest level, we had to make sure that we are staying engaged." Communication was seen as being key to leaders being effective at both leading, and implementing successful change. In this case, the change to be made was in terms of bringing together the three institutions to work together under one academic umbrella organization. As such, to be effective at what they were doing, these leaders had to not only communicate, but they had to "communicate effectively" in the words of Freeman.

However, it was not simply the ability to communicate, but frequency was equally important. Whether knowingly or not, at the president level, how often communication happened appeared to have been very important, whether in person, or online. Pack stated that "we were meeting regularly, sometimes in person, but often via phone, and other electronic means, as it was necessary at the very beginning, and throughout the process of both coming together, and bringing along others within our respective organizations." For Mash, "absent communication, and I mean on a regular basis, more frequent than we probably did, we would not have gotten to where we were." He went further stating that "we had our respective provosts and other leaders meeting regularly and giving us updates and feedback, and relied on us to make certain decisions. So, we need to be in constant contact to keep the work going."

Communication did not just happen among the leaders who were involved in the partnership. Communications appeared to have happened across organizations, as provosts and other vice-presidents continued to reach out to their subordinates, especially when it came to curriculum, enrollment and other processes. According to Rivers, "we had to communicate. Our abilities to communicate and stay connected to those implementing these changes on the ground, meaning department deans was so crucial, without us staying in touch, we would probably have not succeeded." For Bridges, it was "not simply communicate, as much as it was strategic communication, because others who were not so constantly connected to what we were doing, but had to do some implementation, had to buy into the vision and goals of what we were trying to achieve as a collective."

Collaboration. In addition to being good communicators, it was equally important that leaders involved had the ability to navigate the challenges associated with putting together the multi-university partnership. Challenges including the differences that existed in terms of their

financial capacities, which according to both Briggs and Cunningham, could not be overlooked. "Finances were an important aspect of our collaboration" stated Briggs. Cunningham on his part stated that "we had to take into consideration where each institution was financially, at least I know that was true at the president level." In addition to finances, there were differences in terms of institutional culture, which was "dictated by our location" in the words of Pack. There were also the levels of expertise from each institution, as it related to their abilities, more so for [Institutions B and C], to transition from being on ground only, or partly on ground institutions, to moving into an online platform.

Although the above mentioned may sound like potential obstacles to the formation of the multi-university partnership, which they were, what made collaboration "easier" in the words of Briggs, was the fact that for one, collaboration was regarded an "antidote to competition" Briggs further stated. It appeared that leaders involved in the process were all convinced that collaboration was important, because we "can do many things better together than alone" as per Highlander. This way of looking past potential challenges, appeared to have created a supportive environment, which was needed for there to be collaboration. In the opinions of both Briggs and Highlander, the shared history, faith and values were instrumental in creating this supportive environment, because it "feels good to know that you are working with people who share your values, your faith, and your vision. It makes the work easier" according to Briggs. "We shared so much more than just a group of strangers getting together" stated Highlander.

Although Wilson agreed that collaboration was an important key part in terms of them formation of this partnership, and the role it played in helping bring all parties together, he was still skeptical about how genuine collaboration was, given the financial differences that existed between the different institutions involved in the process. He appeared to imply that although

there was collaboration, it could have been better if all parties involved were starting on the same financial footing or level. "There was an effort to, again, do things collaboratively as much as I think they could, but it really was not as much of a true collaboration." He further stated that "if most of the financial support is coming from one institution, thus dictating most of the process, then you do not really have a true collaboration, at least in the true meaning of the word." Having stated that, Wilson was quick to mention that "the work that took place involved a great deal of working together at all levels."

Genuine or not, collaboration still took place, and one of the key facilitators of collaboration was the creation of the "steering committee," according to Briggs, which was a committee composed of all three provosts and vice-presidents. The steering committee was created as a collaborative body to oversee processes, discuss policies and procedures, and make final recommendation to be considered at the president level, which was the final level of decision making, according to Freeman, Mash, and Pack. The creation of the steering committee as facilitator of collaboration was confirmed by the memorandum of understanding created by the steering committee.

In addition to key leadership traits that were important in terms of helping these leaders create a successful partnership, there were equally leadership factors that were informing them as they proceeded. This next section will summarize the leadership factors—mission, and a changing environment of operating—that led to the formation of the multi-university partnership.

Leadership factors. As far as leadership factors that contributed to the formation of the multi-university partnership, common factors that emerged out of the data can be put into two categories: mission, and a changing operating environment. Mission included shared history, shared faith and values, which created a "sense of belonging to a larger community" in the words

of Briggs, “a desire to help a declining church” according to Dawkins, and “the vision to spread a Christ-centered education” in the opinion of Wilson, as well as the desire to “build a national brand” according to Highlander.

A changing operating environment included the “current challenges being faced by smaller, faith-based higher education institutions” according to Freeman, and the desire, in the opinion of Mash, to “go from mainly on ground institutions into online,” which Mash branded as “moving from brick to click.” For [Institution A], the move to initiate this multi-university partnership was motivated by the desire to “sustain its growth and success” according to Briggs, while to the other two, [Institutions B and C], the desire to move online was motivated by the “ability to survive financial difficulties that we were facing” in the word of Cunningham, and to “keep our doors open” according to Wilson.

Mission. Across the board, at all levels of leadership, from all three institutions, one factor was clear when it came to what leadership factors led to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, and this major factor was mission. According to Dawkins, “if it was not about mission, we could have started a pharmacy, or do medicine.” Dawkins’ point was echoed and supported by Pack who stated that “it is always about the mission that is why we were created in the first place, as an institution.” Their mission, which combined was founded on Christian principles, spoke to the need for transformational leaders who would become servants to both the church and the global community.

This mission, which was instrumental in the formation of the multi-university partnership, based on data collected, was referred to by all the leaders involved in this process as being Christ-centered, which once again derived from their shared faith, values, and beginning. A Christ-centered education in the views of Briggs, is an education that is “focused on service

and societal transformation." Briggs further stated that "one of our key values, one of our core values really has to do with service, servanthood, which is focused on the students, focused on serving, focused on others." Moreover, he added that "it is also about creating servants who can go make changes to society." For Highlander, "this transformation of society has never been needed more than now when our world has lost its morals."

Their shared mission appeared to have created a strong sense of community among these leaders, a strong sense of belonging. As such, there was an opportunity for this community, which shared the same foundational philosophy to leverage what they were all about, which is a group of academic institutions that belong to the same faith community. There was a sense of a common bond of faith, as "originally, we were all started for the same purpose and so there was and still is this strong sort of yearning to maintain that in some ways" according to Pack. According to Mash, "our mission may be stated slightly different, but it is the same. We were all created to do the same things, which is to create leaders to serve both the church and society."

Besides a sense of belonging to the same faith community as institutions, there was also a strong support from individuals leaders who saw this "belonging on the same team," in the words of Rivers, as a great opportunity to build an even "bigger community" according to Bridges, which would then expand both the individual mission of each institution, but also the collective mission of this particular community, which despite being in different locations, and operating independent of each other, still held the same faith background.

Mission focused beyond each individual institution's community and location, and was seen as having always been and continuing to "become a global mission" according to Freeman, especially given that "the only thing thriving in a declining church are the universities" in the words of Dawkins. Therefore, as the "thriving arm of the church" according to Wilson, "we

need to continue the mission of the church upon which we were founded" as per Pack. And according to Highlander, "in order to advance the mission, it was no longer in the best interest of the institutions to stay in our bubble." Rivers made it even clearer by stating that "staying very faithful to the original purpose and mission of the church," was "the reason of our existence." In the word of Pack, the partnership allowed not only for a larger audience to be reached, but it also allowed for "students to be exposed to Christian education, so that they can better serve both the church and the world."

The fact that all the institutions involved in the multi-university partnership shared the same foundational beginning—according to data—as it related to their shared faith, doctrine, and philosophy, made it somewhat easier to come together, and "work together toward a common mission and vision," according to Briggs. Highlander echoed the same point when she stated that the goal was to "work together to primarily spread the gospel of Christ through high-quality, Christian education," with the hope to "have a huge impact on the world" according to Rivers. The multi-university partnership according to Rivers, allowed for "each institution to maintain its individual identity, as well as strengthened the collective faith-based identity of all parties involved."

In the end, it was the objective to continue advancing the mission of the church upon which they were created, which mission focused on a Christ-centered education, as stated in the preamble of the steering committee's memorandum of understanding that made the partnership successful. The preamble in the steering committee memorandum of understanding stated that the collective seeks "to optimize their shared values and the shared significance and meaning of their faith, higher education experience, by leveraging resources, personnel and expertise." In

the opinion of Freeman, the goal to expand this mission was reaching out to "as many students as possible beyond our immediate communities, and globally."

A changing operating environment. Although mission was an important factor that was driving the support of the formation of the multi-university partnership, a changing, challenging environment within which these higher education institutions were operating, was another factor that contributed to leaders at all levels within each institution deciding to join the multi-university partnership. Freeman observed that "there was a realization that the world around us was changing." A similar observation was made by Highlander who stated that

> If it was really about mission, 100% like that was the core, we would have done something like this years ago. The issue about higher education, and this is not a critical statement, the issue is real and alive in higher education for private schools, we are going to see them dropping like flies . . . So, the political answer would always be with mission first, and the church and then the finances, but I think the catalyst to everyone working so hard to work together, is based on the reality of higher education today. But that is still rooted in our mission because our passion is that the Christian Universities, our schools will survive this. So, in a way, you could say that the mission is still at the core. Financially if we do not do something together, we will see a lot of our schools go under.

As a result of this realization that "the world around us was changing" in the words of Freeman, and specifically changing "in terms of higher education was being delivered," according to Mash, as well as "the cost associated with deliverance," according to Pack; all the involved leaders in the formation of the multi-university partnership, understood that "we had to figure out a way to do things differently, if we were going to make it" Mash stated. Dawkins saw these challenges in a motivational way because they resulted in "inspired and motivated

leaders" at these three institutions who "wanted to work together, and figure out ways not only to adapt to these challenges," in the opinion of Wilson, but leaders who also wanted to see their individual institutions "survive in this new, harder business environment" according to Pack.

Proactivity appeared to have been of great importance, based on how these leaders proceeded, and because "we could no longer just sit and hope for things to get better" according Highlander. Realizing that the operating environment around them was changing, leaders from the three institutions came together at the invitation of one of them, to do what Briggs referred to as "something that was long awaited, had always been on paper, but no one had ever cared to try and make it happen." For all three institutions, the challenges they were facing, had impacted them to a point where they had to adapt. Therefore "joining the partnership was one of the ways to adapt to this new business environment" according to Briggs.

According to Mash, the multi-university partnership provided an opportunity for "growth and for financial stability," because of the "ability to share resources, especially in this current environment where smaller size, higher education institutions have struggled to stay open" in the words of Bridges. Moreover, joining the partnership, which provided an opportunity to "reach a larger market" as per Wilson, would provide some "financial stability" as per Pack, because "if there is no margin there is no mission" as per Mash. For [Institution A], it was "the ability to reach newer markets, and expand upon its successes" according to Freeman. For Institutions B and C, it was a combination of "one wanting to expand online offerings" according to Pack, and "getting started in the online market to both survive these challenges associated with a declining enrollment, as well as sustain ourselves in the long run," stated Mash.

Summary. Data analysis from all three leadership levels—president, provost, and third level of leadership—revealed the importance of leadership in the formation and support of the

multi-university partnership between three faith-based, higher education institutions. Leaders were the catalyst as far as change was concerned. Although servant leadership was the preferred leadership style that leaders across the board self-subscribed to, emerging leadership traits that were important in helping leaders make the decision to join and support the multi-university partnership did cut across all leadership styles—servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership. These traits included the ability of a leader to lead, to empower others, to care for others, to build relationship, to communicate, and to collaborate.

In addition to leadership traits, several factors emerged, which played an important role in terms of both informing and influencing decisions made by leaders at all three institutions, to not only join the multi-university partnership, but to also support its formation. Although there were several factors that emerged, they all fit within two major categories. These categories were mission, and a changing operating environment. It was clear to leaders at all levels that what they were doing had to be based on the mission upon which they were created, because their institution mission was beyond providing an education. Their combined mission was about providing a unique type of education, which was Christ-centered. Through this mission, not only did these leaders see themselves as providing an opportunity to share Christ with the world, but they were helping a declining church upon which they were founded.

Technology, economics, and other factors that have greatly impacted higher education, and continue to do so, all fell under a changing, operating environment category. Leaders at all three institutions appeared to realize that the environment within which they had been operating continued to operate had changed, and this changing environment was threatening their abilities to continue advancing their mission individual institutions, and collective mission. As such, these leaders had to figure out ways in which to adapt to the changing environment without

altering their mission, or who they were. Their willingness to adapt was the reason why getting together as institutions within the same umbrella system, founded on the same principles, and carrying the same mission, was the best way to move forward, by creating a multi-university partnership. Therefore, the creation of the multi-university partnership was a response to counter the challenges they, like many other, smaller sized, faith-based other institutions, were facing.

Chapter 5 will include summary of results, discussion of results, discussion of results in relation to the literature, limitations, implication of the results for practice, policy, and theory, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, the researcher will summarize the findings of this research study, discuss overall findings, the meaning behind those findings, as well as how the findings related to the literature used in this research study. Furthermore, the researcher will provide a reflection on findings, and how they informed the literature—whether or not there was additional knowledge added to the community of practice/scholarship. Moreover, the researcher will present limitations to this study, implication of the findings as they relate to practice, policy, and theory. Finally, the researcher will give recommendations for further research based on the study findings, as well as a conclusion to this study. In the next section, the researcher will summarize the results of this study.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to discover what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership between three faith-based, higher education institutions. In addition to this main research question, the following sub-questions were included:

1. What type of individual leadership style(s) was (were) prominent within the leadership of each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
2. In what ways did the style(s) reflect their collective, and institution style(s)?
3. What influences the leader(s) decision-making process?
4. What influenced the decision-making process of each individual leaders, and as a collective, within each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
5. How did individual leaders within each institution, and as a collective group, make decisions in relation to the partnership?

Based on prior similar research uncovered during the literature review (Baker & Baldwin, 2015; Filer, 2013; Lehning, 2013; Sawyer, 2010; Schmaltz, 2010; Searcy, 2010; Stevenson, 2010), the researcher determined that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate methodology for this study, because of the potential to uncover rich data using qualitative methods (Yin, 2014). Collecting rich, contextual information for this particular research study was important, given that the researcher was investigating leadership traits and factors of higher education leaders at three faith-based, higher education institutions. This study investigated a multi-university partnership that was formed by three faith-based, higher education institutions, multiple-case study was the appropriate method, because each institution could be treated as its own case, and cross-comparisons could be made.

This study sample included leaders at the executive and administrative levels, from all three institutions involved in the creation and support of the multi-university partnership. These leaders included three presidents (one from each institution), three provosts (one from each institution), chief enrollment officers, chief finance officers, and deans of departments. Overall, a total of 15 persons were invited to participate in this study. They included six females and nine males. Of the 15 potential participants invited to participate, 10 participants accepted the invitation. Of the 10 participants, three were females (one from each institution represented) and the other seven participants were males. Although there was lack of ethnic diversity in the potential recruitment sample, as well as final participant group, all of whom were Caucasians, there was nevertheless some gender diversity. Participants' ages were between 35–70 years old. In the end, the important factor considered during participant selection was the ability of potential participants to provide rich information from their experiences about the formation and

support of the multi-university partnership, which could be used to answer the main research question, and sub-questions.

Interviews, documents, and online surveys were the methods used to collect data. Interviews were conducted using varying methods, primarily because of where participants were geographically located—different states. Interview data was collected by way of in person face-to-face interviews, online audio interviews, and online face-to-face interviews. Documents were collected using existing online repositories and sites maintained by the universities, as well as obtained through some participants. Surveys were collected by the researcher using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which is provided by Mind Garden, an independent publisher that produces psychological assessments and instruments in Leadership. Mind Garden provided surveys, and a platform to both collect and analyze survey data.

Data was analyzed using an explanation building approach, according to Klenke (2008) is "a form of pattern matching, in which the analysis of the case study is carried out by building an explanation of the case" (p. 67). Data analysis was an ongoing process during the study; data was analyzed soon after it was collected. Interviews were transcribed within 24 to 48 hours of their completion, and analysis started in most cases within 72 hours of transcription, and continued throughout the coding process. After data had been collected and organized, the researcher began the process of data coding, a process of inquiry that allowed the researcher to organize and sort out data (Creswell, 1998). Coding was used to compile, label, and categorize data, which allowed the researcher to better summarize, and synthesize collected data. After data coding, the researcher attempted to put data into perspective—comparing data results against expected findings to see how data might answer the main research question and sub-questions.

The researcher used narrative analysis to interpret findings. This step involved making sense of what data were communicating, interpreting the findings that emerged from data, offer an explanation, and draw conclusions. Using narrative analysis, the researcher was able to draw new meaning through data interpretation, thereby making sense of what the researcher thought happened or imagined having happened. Analyzed data revealed leadership factors and traits that contributed to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership between three faith-based, higher education institutions. Traits that emerged included the ability of leaders to lead their subordinates, to empower others—especially those they supervised—and to care about their subordinates. Traits also included relationship building, as well as leaders' abilities to effectively communicate and collaborate among themselves, and outside of their circle of leadership.

Factors that emerged fell into two major categories: mission and changes that were taking place in the current operating environment of higher education. Mission focused on a history of shared faith and values, because of a common beginning shared by all three institutions, as a result of being founded by the same larger institution. Furthermore, mission included a desire to continue advancing a "Christ-centered" education, while at the same time "helping a struggling and declining church," according to Dawkins who further stated that the church had "seen a decline in membership."

Changes in the current operating environment centered on challenges, both economic and technological, have had a great impact in terms of how education is delivered, and have altered how higher education institutions operate. In the next section, the researcher will discuss the results of the study.

Discussion of the Results

A summary of both leadership traits and factors from the findings revealed the importance of having a combination of leadership styles in action when it comes to considering, pursuing, and/or engaging in the creation of a multi-institution partnership. However, although a variety of leadership styles were used by participants as they worked to form and support the multi-university partnership, the study results clearly revealed that servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Irving, 2011) was the participants' favored style. Not only was servant leadership their favorite style, it was also instrumental when it came to decisions and processes, as they related to mission. Nevertheless, participants at all levels of leadership, from all three institutions, also referenced other styles of leading they used, such as transformational, business, and at times, situational leadership.

Leadership. Participants consistently reminded the researcher about their primary mission as leaders of institutions that were founded on being of "service to others," according to a response given by Pack in one interview. Freeman used the concept of DNA as a way of illustrating by stating that "servant leadership, being of service to others is part of our DNA, because that is primarily why we were created in the first place." When asked to clarify the "we," he stated that he meant "our respective institutions." Given the fact that much of the information provided by participants mostly related to servant leadership, a substantive portion of this discussion will focus on servant leadership, because data revealed that it was the preferred style of leading for all participants.

The researcher was not surprised by the fact that servant leadership was the preferred style of leadership used, at least as professed by the participants themselves. The researcher expected servant leadership to dominate, based on the fact that all three institutions shared

historical ties in an institution that has a strong foundation in terms of service. Not only were all three institutions faith-based, they were also Christian, higher education institutions. Christ, or as expressed by most participants, a "Christ-centered education" was at the center of how all the participants approached leadership. According to Freeman, "we are here to be of service to others first." Greenleaf (1977) saw this desire to be of service, as a key trait of a servant leader—to be both a servant and a leader, with service taking precedence.

At the presidential level, participants expressed a strong leaning—both in preference and in action—and affinity, toward servant leadership. The researcher was able to confirm this self-professed subscription toward servant leadership through interview data shared by other participants at both the provost and third levels of leadership. Based on this data, arguing against the self-professed style of leading as expressed by these participants was a non-starter. There was a particular emphasis on Freeman from the other two participants at the president level, as someone who initiated the multi-university partnership. These participants expressed a strong belief that Freeman was driven by a genuine desire to help other institutions that shared the same mission overcome their struggles. Meeting Freeman in his office was fascinating to the researcher, because of how he was relating to his staff, as well as how he was connecting with the researcher. Judging by his actions in the office, Freeman came across as being more of a leader who enjoyed leading by example through serving those he led. The same could also be said about the other participants.

According to Yu (2007), servant leadership may have been modeled on Christian leadership. Because collected data revealed a self-professed leaning toward servant leadership by all participants at all levels of leadership, who lead three faith-based, Christian institutions, Yu's suggestion made sense to the researcher that these participants would be leaning strongly

toward this way of leading. According to Freeman, a servant leader has to demonstrate the ability to serve others, and to "influence those he or she serves so they too can become servant leaders themselves." There was one particular instance while meeting with Freeman, in which he truly embodied this notion of being a servant first. The secretary was out of office on the day of his meeting with the researcher. As the researcher entered the main office, he learned that another meeting was taking place in the same building, but on the second floor. One of the vice-presidents approached Freeman to ask if she could both help set up his meeting space, and make coffee, to which Freeman replied, "Thank you! I will take care of that. Please go on to your meeting." A few minutes later, before the interview started, Freeman took some water into the other meeting that was taking place upstairs.

According to Irving (2011), servant leadership is both humbling and positively impactful in terms of its effect on those being served. In terms of impact, McCormick (1994) referenced the example of Jesus' disciples who eventually became faith leaders themselves, following in the footsteps of their master. Both McCormick (1994) and Irving (2011) referenced the story of Jesus, as a perfect example of leadership that is rooted in service. A review of each institution's mission statement, as well as that of the larger Online University System, upon which each one of these institutions was founded, revealed a great emphasis on serving others first.

Mash, referencing servant leadership, stated that a servant leader has to focus on the "greater good," which he clarified to say that a servant leader was "not to be the center of focus, but let others be in the spotlight, because it (leadership) is never about you as a leader." The implication here was that a servant leader needed to understand that their place was never in the front, but rather leading from behind, because the ultimate goal of a servant leader was to "create transformational leaders" who would in turn "have a greater impact on society" according to

Mash. For a servant leader to get to such transformational point of impact, he or she had to become a servant first, which simply meant that a servant leader had to become a coach and a mentor.

The literature revealed that in order for a servant leader to have a positive impact on others—subordinates—and help them grow into impactful leaders themselves, while he or she remained in the background, a servant leader had to model servant leadership very well for those he or she led. However, allowing others to shine while leading from behind did not mean a leader being completely out of the picture. Leading from behind meant serving first, and leading second. It meant a servant leader helping mentor others to the same level of leadership, and then allowing them to shine. This notion of serving first was one that Wilson strongly expressed, in relation to his admiration for his institution president who "allowed me space and time to both grow, expand my professional abilities, and ultimately take on additional responsibilities, including being involved in this partnership."

Collaboration. Wilson was not the only one admiring the idea of "seeing the self in others," as noted by Briggs. According to Briggs, it is fundamental for a servant leader to "prioritize what was in the best interest of all." He further put an accent on the importance of a servant leader to lead from behind, because "that was the catalyst" to the eventual formation and support of the multi-university partnership. Both Wilson and Briggs made valid points, because given the levels of expertise—in relation to the process of creating this multi-university partnership—among involved participants, as well as competing interests between the three institutions, reaching consensus on anything could have been very hard both in terms of who the ultimate decision-maker was going to be, as well as who would lead the various committees.

However, when at the highest levels of leadership, especially at the president level, there was consensus around the clarity of the ultimate mission to be accomplished by all three institutions, through the multi-university partnership, it became clear to see why [Institution A] would be willing to share their profits with the other two institutions. The help came in the form of helping one start entire processes from ground up, while helping the other strengthen existing systems. [Institution A] provided both financial and human capital to help the other two institutions. It equally became clear to see why leaders from the other two institutions would be willing to allow [Institution A] to take almost total leadership (as described by some of the participants) of the direction and implementations of key components relating to the partnership.

However, although what some participants expressed in terms of collaboration at all levels of leadership sounded entirely positive, there were others who did hold the same positive view. According to Wilson, "it was not all consensus and everyone gets along perfectly well." Wilson further indicated that the process of collaboration was "not that great, because the multi-university partnership had one major initiator." The one major initiator was [Institution A].

Institution A impact. As a result of [Institution A] being the institution whose leaders initiated the idea of a multi-university partnership, the overall leadership in terms of direction, and major decisions, were driven by leadership at [Institution A]. In Wilson's opinion, there was "much less collaboration than at least one of our partners would have liked . . . we were not successfully working together as one group, with one voice, it was rather visible that institution A held much more power, and was coming into the partnership from a position of advantage." He further stated that "most of the time we had meetings, and the meetings were held at [Institution A] location. And [Institution A] really took over almost all the infrastructural components of running the program," according to Wilson.

Wilson statements directly contradicted the collaborative picture presented by all other participants. His statement also contradicted the very concept of "seeing the self in others," which was a theme throughout the many conversations with other participants. Although Wilson negatively perceived some aspects of collaboration, according to Shelton (2008), for collaborations such as the multi-university partnership to be successful, the concept of central leadership is important. Using Southwest Virginia Higher Education Consortium as an example, Shelton stated that:

> Staff, partners, and students all agreed that strong, effective leadership was required if a consortium was to succeed. When asked to rank the factors that contributed to the success of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Consortium, the presence of a strong consortium leader was identified most frequently.

Although Wilson was clear about the seeming lack of consensus, he also acknowledged the efforts that went into trying to build a strong collaboration by stating that "there was an effort to, again, do things collaboratively as much as I think they could, but it really was not as much of a true collaboration." The lack of consensus given the different point of view involved in the process was typical. Multiple perspectives create various interpretations, which when coming from partners who may see a situation through their respective lens, may lead to sense-making based on individual and not shared interests (Eddy, 2003). Although Wilson referenced what he perceived as a less collaborative process, most other participants were not overly concerned, as they focused more what had been and was being accomplished. They specifically focused on the long history they shared, both as institutions within the same national organization, and because of the connections that existed long before they started the partnership, at the highest levels of each institution.

At the same time, the researcher acknowledged the reliance and confidence in the information provided by the participants in the absence of which there was no other reference point. It is possible that during the interview process for this study, the participants, especially at the president level, felt that they needed to project unity in order to protect the integrity of their individual institutions. The fact that a couple of participants directly or indirectly referenced the lack of a true collaboration spoke volumes about the complexity involved in the process of putting together such a multi-institution partnership, because partnerships require compromises.

Although other participants involved in this process acknowledged the place of [Institution A] within the multi-university partnership, given the fact that the partnership itself was an initiative of [Institution A], no other participant except Wilson and Highlander expressed doubt around whether or not this was a true collaboration. Wilson expressed more doubt than Highlander. In addition to the already mentioned reason for other participants, especially at the president level expressing strong views around collaboration, it could be that they chose not to be critical of this particular partnership, because of the hope for a "potential future partnership," according to Briggs. It could also be that Wilson was too far removed from much of the critical aspect of the process, which resulted in his interpretation. However, Wilson's comments should not be dismissed, and may contain important insights given that the multi-university partnership dissolved before the completion of this study. The process may have been collaborative, but something must not have worked well, given that the collaboration, which was seen as such a promising partnership by the majority of the participants, ultimately did not last.

The dissolution. Interestingly enough, other participants, though not explicit in their comments, recognized that the dissolution may have partly been a result of having one organization as the initiator, which came with some form of due gratitude to allow the initiator

the opportunity to lead in this manner. For Kezar (2009), such partnerships require strong leadership, with a strong vision, in order to make them work. Cunningham stated that "there was a vision initiated by Freeman, which he understood well given the expertise at Institution A when it "came to the work we were trying to do—having a robust online presence." Given that the other two institutions had not even started or mastered the online market, "it made perfect sense for [Institution A] to take the lead." Cunningham noted. The literature examined in Chapter 2 pertaining to these types of partnerships showed mix models of consortia—associations of institutions that come together to create a joint venture. Some have single initiators, and other have multiple initiators who start on equal level (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). In this case, given the fact that [Institution A] was far ahead of both [Institutions B and C] in terms of finances, as well as already having developed and implemented online education programs, and the fact that [Institution A] was providing additional resources to both [Institutions B and C], it was not surprising that [Institution A] would take the lead. After all, the partnership was not initiated by all three institutions on equal level.

However, even as involved participants appreciated the efforts and collaboration that went into the multi-university partnership, there was a sense of unfairness in line with what Wilson indicated, especially as perceived by some leaders and other staff at [Institution A]. According to Briggs, "too many resources were being given up by [Institution A] in support of both [Institutions B and C]." According to Highlander:

> I think in some ways I can be a little bit more direct but that did not happen, and so I think there was some animosity, you know, especially with [B and C], because they depended on our revenue for their enrollment. I know you are not really asking me for criticism, but I think that was one of the flaws in our leadership, we did not look at a

better approach to how we make this business work. It is important to know that a couple of year after it was started, the multi-university partnership suddenly dissolved.

Both Wilson and Highlander were referencing a larger issue; the dissolution of the multi-university partnership. However, before going deeper into the partnership dissolution, it is worth acknowledging that participants involved in the formation and support of the multi-university partnership appreciated the impact that it had in terms of their continued relationship, which existed before, and continued after the development of the partnership. According to Briggs,

> Even though the partnership was not successful because we did not have the best financial model, there were solid friendships created, there was a respect, a renewed respect that each institution had for each other, so now that we were kind of back to being separate, we are still very closely aligned, we are still very good friends, we still do a lot of communicating.

According to Shelton (2008), there is a level of creativity required for the success of any partnership, because as easy as it is to discover similarities or areas of conflict in partners' interests, it is hard for find new ways of collaborating that transcends areas of conflict, and meet all partners' needs. Briggs noted that what was lacking with this particular partnership, especially relating to a sound financial model, was creativity, which was necessary to form a successful partnership with lasting impact. Nevertheless, as Freeman stated, the three participants at the president level recognized the "impact that the partnership had on their working relationship." And as Mash stated, "we started something which maybe did not work this time, but does not mean we did not lay the foundation." Pack for his part stated that, "just because this model did not work, it does not mean we will stop working together altogether. We

are still collaborating in different ways." The literature revealed that partnerships can succeed or fail depending on many factors.

From the above participants' statements, it was clear that the multi-university partnership was not what brought these institutions and their presidents together in the first place. They were already collaborating well before the idea of the partnership occurred. With that said, one cannot speak about the multi-university partnership without speaking about its dissolution, because no matter how much these leaders seemed to praise the partnership, there was something along the way that did not work, which led to the dissolution of the partnership.

Reasons for dissolution. There were many reasons advanced, as to why after less than three years, the multi-university partnership dissolved. As much as there were factors that led to the partnership's formation, there were equally both internal and external factors that ended up working against the partnership; the greatest and most impactful of these factors that was named by some of the participants was the third-party partner, or vendor. According to Highlander, "the other factor that I think played against all of us was our vendor." Beforehand, Highlander acknowledged the challenges associated with a partnership that had never been attempted before. "This was something new that had not been attempted before, and so it was always going to be challenging to make happen." However, in her view, starting something new like this partnership was "probably not that much of a problem, as it was dealing with a jealous vendor." She elaborated further stating that:

> I think ultimately the third party did not want [Institution A] to be the managing partner. We know that they did not want us to be the managing partner. They wanted their own contract, they wanted the best of both worlds, they wanted the collaboration on branding and marketing but they wanted more of an individual contract and they did not want us to

manage it . . . I think the vendor in the end has gotten what they wanted; they have individual contracts with each of the schools . . . Academic institutions are very independent and it is difficult to get them to work together.

Wilson echoed Highlander's point about the role that the vendor played, and what their motive may have been. According to Wilson:

I think, the vendor just wanted contracts. Because remember they were trying to raise money from venture capitalists. And without actual contracts they had a challenge in doing that. And so, all they wanted was contracts. Therefore, there was constant pressure from them to conclude a contract.

This particular model was unique in a sense that although the literature revealed several partnerships, there was hardly any example with a model that involved a third-party partner playing such a crucial role. And maybe that was the downfall of this particular partnership, and one of the strong reasons why it ended up dissolving.

The dissolution was seen not as a failure judging from participants' reaction, but rather as a learning moment. The reason being that this positive view of the dissolution, once again demonstrated the idea advanced by these participants that having shared values, faith, beliefs, and history was key to bringing these three institutions together. Therefore, because their key external partner—vendor—did not share in this history—values, and beliefs—and was more interested in "self-serving," according to Highlander, the conclusion can only be that having the vendor who did not share the same history, values, and beliefs, was a major disadvantage, which ultimately led to a dissolution.

In addition to the challenges associated with the vendor, another challenge the multi-university partnership faced was what Briggs called "the perception" that since [Institution A]

initiated the partnership with a vendor who already had strong working relationship with [Institution A], and ultimately became the partnership vendor, "there was no equality no matter how much leaders at all sites tried to mitigate it," according to Briggs. Shelton (2008) spoke about the impossibility of trying to fake a partnership, meaning that either a true partnership exists, or it does not. He further stated that in order to forge a lasting partnership, all parties have to be treated equally. And based on the dissolution, the only conclusion that can be made is that no true equality existed among the three institutions. According to Briggs:

> As a consequence, what happened and I just say this bluntly and honestly, what wound up happening was that instead of being equal partners, [Institution A] was always the big dog. And the impression was that our vendor pays more attention to [Institution A] and all the lead people are at [Institution A], all the people making decisions are at [Institution A]. That was a perception that we tried to mitigate against, it was not easy, I do not think we ever succeeded. There were some people at [Institution A] who thought the partnership drew down on resources and that the partnership was not a good thing, that [Institution A] by itself could become much larger than it was, and that these two smaller schools were dragging us down.

Briggs' "big dog" perception about how [Institution A] was seen and referred to by other staff members, was echoed and confirmed by Cunningham who stated:

> My personal biased view is that given how [Institution A] was positioned, because of the partnership, and because they were the intermediary in all communications, and because the vendor had an established relationship with [Institution A], that pre-existed the collaboration, the heavy decisions, the new initiatives, the strongest communication was

happening between the vendor and [Institution A]. And both [Institutions B and C] were less connected, and were less a part of those decision-making processes.

Cunningham's point about feeling less part of the decision-making process could have been because of how far removed from the upper leadership he was. He was not clear in terms of what he meant by the decision-making processes, given that he was part of the steering committee, which was making recommendations to upper management. One way to view Cunningham's position could be that although he was part of the decision-making process through the steering committee, he still felt distant because he was not part of the final decision-making process. This would make sense given Kezar (2009) view of how crucial central leadership is when it comes to partnerships like the multi-university partnership.

Cunningham's position could also be viewed through the lens of what Briggs described as the "big dog" perception. As the initiator of the partnership through its leadership, institution A was viewed as wielding more decision-making power than the other two institutions. This perception was in relation to the distribution of resources (Adams & Copland, 2007), which was extensively discussed, especially at the third level of leadership. Interestingly enough, both at the president and provost levels, there was less talk about some of the challenges (Afshar, 2005) that the partnership faced. Despite the researcher pressing for clarifications and answers at these two levels, leaders were reluctant to talk about the dissolution and what led to it, and were more interested in talking about the successes of the partnership.

They often appeared to lead the conversation toward what could only be described as an optimistic view in the aftermath of a multi-university partnership that no longer existed. Simply to say that, even though leaders at these two levels acknowledged that the multi-university partnership as had initially conceived no longer existed, there was still some naiveté that

somehow the partnership would come back. In fact, it appeared in their views that it did not dissolve, because "the idea is still there, and ongoing collaboration is still taking place between our three institutions," according to Pack. Freeman stated that "even if this particular version of the partnership did not work out, as we had intended, it does not mean that the idea is dead. We are still in contact with each other, and helping each other." It was hard to conclude whether this was simply a case of denial of failure, or hope for future attempts to recreate the partnership.

Results. Although servant leadership, which was the preferred and self-professed mode of leading by every single one of these leaders, seemed to have been effective for the most part, in terms of both collaboration and building a relationship-based coalition, it was still challenging to get everyone to agree on everything, as examples in paragraphs above proved. In the end, being of service to others appeared to have carried them through to their initial goal, which was to create the partnership. However, to reach this goal, leadership played a crucial role. Therefore, there were traits and factors that emerged, which were instrumental in helping make the multi-university partnership a reality. These traits included the ability of a leader to lead, to empower others, to care for others, to build relationship, to communicate, and to collaborate. Factors fell under two categories: mission and current operating environment.

These traits were observed across all leadership styles, with the strongest, or at least as self-professed by all the leaders involved in this process, being service. Pack stated that "we were created for the service to our church and society," while Freeman stated that "our priority is to be of service to others." Seeing how many traits that emerged and were reflected across all leadership styles was fascinating, although servant leadership was the highly preferred style.

Going into the research, and given how complex forming a multi-university partnership usually is based on data discovered in the literature (Burley et al., 2012), the researcher expected

the results to partly answer the research question. The researcher's expectation resulted from the fact that in addition to the main research question, there were additional sub-questions, which the researcher was not sure how open participants were going to be in terms of providing answers, especially on follow up, clarifying questions. There were just many factors at play, which could have gone in any direction as far as questions were concerned. Among these were the fact that partner schools' different geographic areas provided and supported different worldviews.

It was therefore surprising, to see the level of synergy, and a sense of belonging (Davies & Kennedy, 2009), which appeared to have driven these leaders to work effectively and put together the multi-university partnership. In addition to being servant leaders, and focusing on traits that embodied servant leadership—collaborating, coaching, encouraging, building relationship, communicate, and empower—there were factors that equally played a key role in helping leaders come together to create and support the multi-university partnership.

Reading through all the data collected at different locations and at varying times, and seeing the level of connection and resemblance in the given answers, was fascinating for the researcher. In some ways, reading through participants' responses felt like a rehearsal—as if these participants knew the answers to these questions. For example, there was a strong emphasis on servant leadership across the board, and an observed uniformity expressed in the form of a desire for a global mission, among other things. There was a single language spoken when it came to how these participants referenced leadership and mission. The participants did not have any prior knowledge about the interview protocol, and were not coached about other leaders' answers provided by the researcher. The reason for this observation is because the researcher can easily see how anyone reading answers may conclude that maybe these leaders were coached about questions and answers prior to being interviewed.

In addition to leadership, mission, and challenges being faced by these institutions as a result of changes in the business environment within which they operated, these findings revealed additional factors that led to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership. These factors included the length of time these leaders had served together, which mattered a great deal. The participants not only believed in the mission given to them to achieve, they had served together for such a long time, that they had embodied the very mission they were given to achieve. The length of service seemed to have strengthened their sense of service.

These participants viewed themselves not only as leaders, but in many different ways as messengers of Christ, and therefore had "an obligation to make sure we carry out the mission of the church, which is Christ-centered," according to Freeman. In addition, Freeman stated that "we are the mission, we have to carry on the mission of the church, which is to be of service to others, thereby modeling in the same manner as our Lord did." In the same manner, Pack stated that, "we are of service to the church," while Mash referred to this group of leaders as "missionaries." From these statements, a clear picture started to emerge of a group of leaders who saw themselves as the very embodiments of a mission which they viewed as being centered on servant leadership, and Christ-likeness. In many different ways, the conversation felt like the researcher was talking to religious leaders, and not presidents, provosts, and vice-presidents of higher education institutions. At the president level, two of the participants were ordained ministers, which could explain the missionary mindset.

Leading these institutions was much more than simply doing a job, because there was a mission, which had divine-inspired implications, at least according to participants. When Pack stated that "we are of service to the church," his statement made a significant impression on the researcher's mind, and the researcher could see why such a commitment and a long history of

service existed. What these leaders appeared to have committed to was not just a job, but something akin to missionary work, because not only were they charged with leading these higher education institutions, but they were doing so to "spread the kingdom," according to Highlander. Capon (2002) equated the spreading of the kingdom to the parable of the sower that Jesus used in his teaching to his disciples about the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:1−23).

According to Bridges, leaders were working to make sure that "a Christ-centered education" could be spread across the globe, and for Rivers one goal was that, "Christian communities could be created." And through their words, a picture started to emerge as to why servant leadership was the preferred, self-expressed style of leading, and why mission was a cornerstone behind the partnership, as far as major factors were concerned.

Pack, Mash, and Freeman made the same references to Christian leadership, because Yu implied that servant leadership may have been modeled on Christian leadership as exemplified by Jesus Christ through the act he performed of washing his disciples' feet. This act by Jesus, according to Freeman demonstrated the ability of a servant leader to "influence those he or she serves to become servant leaders themselves." Freeman's point was similar to Irving (2011) who perceived servant leadership as being both humbling, and positively impactful in terms of its effect on those being served. In the case of Jesus story, the reference being his disciples who eventually became faith leaders themselves (McCormick (1994). Both McCormick (1994) and Irving (2011) referred to the coaching and transformational aspect of servant leadership when using the story of Jesus, as a perfect example of leadership that is rooted in service.

Using the above example of Jesus and the influence he had on his disciples, leading them to imitate what he was doing, a conclusion can be drawn that the uniformity in terms of answers that the researcher observed during this process was a result of both the level of connection

between the three presidents, and the influence they each had on their subordinates, as well as others within their institutions. Longevity in terms of staying in the same position for a long period of time, and forging greater relationship in the process, can have a huge impact when it comes to collaboration (Fritz & Ibrahim, 2010).

In the end, the length of time these leaders spent leading their individual institutions while maintaining contact with each other, through their connection to the same umbrella organization (which was the church under which they were created) mattered most. This connection which lasted for decades, facilitated collaboration when it came time to discuss, create, and support the multi-university partnership. Moreover, it was not simply the length of time, but also the connection to the mission, which appeared to have created a sense of belonging and togetherness at the highest levels of leadership of all three institutions. In addition, there was a sense of belonging, which created a common language, and a different way of viewing both leadership and mission based on relationship. According to Walter (1980), the success of a new undertaking by an organization depends on how leader approach working with their followers. Considering that an average time of service at the highest level of all three institutions was around 30 years, it became clear why there was such a high level of resemblance for leaders whose connections did not start when they became leaders of their respective institutions, but started in their shared high school and college experiences.

The research results not only showed the traits and factors that influenced, or helped these leaders make the decision to join, and help form a multi-university partnership, but also spoke to the values of longevity in terms of service. However, serving did not simply mean leading any institution, as it was a service to an organization founded on the same faith and philosophy. As stated by Briggs, “you had a group of presidents who were very much

likeminded. You know, they were good businessmen but they also shared faith, they also shared those same values, those collective values that we are brothers in the faith." In other words, if it had been the case that these leaders had come from different faiths, with different missions—even though they may have known each other for decades—it would have been difficult to come together and form a partnership as they did. Therefore, sharing the same philosophical values, faith, and historical beginning, proved to be the centerpiece of why this multi-university partnership came into existence, and continued to be supported.

In addition to having leadership traits necessary to lead higher education institutions with a strong focus on service and mission, it is important to have shared values that go beyond leadership qualities and abilities, in order to pull off something as complex, and as expensive, as this multi-university partnership. Had it not been for a shared faith, and being under the same umbrella institution, [Institution A] would probably not have been willing to spend so much financial and human capital in helping both [Institutions B and C]. As stated by Briggs, "there were some people who thought the partnership drew down on resources, and that the partnership was not a good thing, because [Institution A] by itself could become much larger than it was, and that these two smaller schools were dragging us down." Wilson stated that,

> [Institution A] sent, and I will just put this in perspective for you, [Institution C] received in two successive years millions of dollars from [Institution A]. And that money was intended to help [Institution C] get online operations up and running as quickly as possible could.

In other words, leaders at [Institution A] were willing to provide this level of support, because of the mission they shared with the other two institutions, as well as the relationships that had been forged over the years. The decision to provide such levels of support could also

have related to the ability of [Institution A] to survive in a challenging market, which required some levels of partnership in order to share resources.

No institution would be willing to spend so much financial and human capital to help another one that is struggling, if they only shared the hope of collaborating to become something different. It was clear that [Institution A] leadership initiated, and supported this partnership both as a matter of helping the other two get started, but also "helping lift a brother in the mission" in the words of Dawkins. The sense of a collective identity (Bass, 1990) was much stronger, because it was based on history, values, and faith, which these institutions and their leaders shared. I would conclude from this that being effective leaders was not enough, neither was being in the same business model to get a partnership going. Despite its dissolution, getting to the level of creating and supporting a multi-university partnership required more than just leadership abilities and shared struggle. It required working within the same system, under the same umbrella entity, with shared philosophy, which in this case was faith and values. This next section will discuss results in relation to the literature.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The literature revealed that it takes effective leadership to make changes happen in organization. Moreover, the literature also revealed that there is a process through which change has to follow, with the most used theory of change being Kurt Lewin's theory of organizational change (Lewin, 1946). According to this theory of organizational change, there are three stages in the process of organizational change. They include the unfreeze stage, the change stage, and the refreeze stage. This theory has been built upon by several other scholars over the years, the most recent and notables being Kotter's (1996) 8-step model of change, and Hiatt (2006) ADKAR change management model. Although not explicitly stated, there were aspects of the

multi-university partnership that appeared to have gone through the stages of change, especially in the financial aid, and admission departments.

This case study supports the theory of organizational change model (Lewin, 1946), because the process followed to achieve change reflected the theory of change. In this case, the initial meetings prior to these leaders getting together to craft their first draft of what the multi-university partnership was going to look like, took several months. This was due to the process of change, which required setting perimeters, and prior work that needed to be done in preparation of getting everybody else together. As stated by Mash, "we had several meetings among ourselves before the creation of the steering committee." And when asked to clarify further, Mash stated that "this was a process [we] had started and [we] needed to be ourselves, before we brought in others within our own institutions." For Freeman, a "shift" was taking place, and a "process" had started, which was "going to change some parts, or aspects of our institutions, because there were things that we were going to be doing together from that point on." And for Rivers, "given that our various departments were going to collaborate, we had to make changes and shifts how we were operating."

The literature revealed that in order for an organization to successfully go through the process of change, several things had to happen, one of which was for leaders to become "change agents." According to Usher (2009), change agents play a crucial role in order to successfully prepare an organization for change. However, being change agents alone is not enough, as Usher (2009) further suggested, in order to make organizational change happen, leaders have to start changing beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors at an organization's core, and in a sense, redefine their institution. Although their collective mission was not changed, how these leaders proceeded, and measures, as well as procedures that they put in place, did affect beliefs, changed

attitudes and behaviors. According to Briggs, some people were not happy with the change that was taking place, which resulted in some level of resistance. Resistance is a normal part of change as people go through change, which often creates imbalances, and resistance tends to happen (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1946). In this case, resistance was not coming from the highest levels of leadership, but more from "department directors, especially in financial aid and enrollment who had to make changes to accommodate working with other departments" according to Briggs.

In addition to being change agents, these leaders had to exhibit specific traits, which were based on many factors, in order to be effective about what they were trying to achieve. In this case, executing on a plan aimed at bringing together a group of higher education institutions under one umbrella institution. These traits derived from the leadership styles that emerged from the literature. Although the study results reflected much of what was anticipated, mentioning the dominance of servant and transformational leadership styles is crucial, because of how prominent these two styles were, with servant leadership being even more dominant. Given the fact that these institutions were faith-based with a mission built on service, the researcher was not surprised about the dominance of servant leadership as the preferred style leading.

The literature further revealed that there are ongoing challenges facing higher education institutions. According to Staley, Dennis, and Trinkle (2011), there are currently widespread challenges facing higher education institutions, especially, private institutions (Supiano, 2008), which have created uncertainties of both national and international scope, with their combined effects placing an ongoing financial burden on these institutions. As a result, higher education institutions, like every other business, have to continuously figure out a way to adapt to these

challenges, or face the possibility of closing their doors for good, as has been the case of some, smaller, private, tuition-reliant institutions.

One of the ways in which higher education institutions are responding to these challenges, and in particular, economic challenges, is via consortia, which according to Martin and Samels (1994), are strategic partnerships aimed and helping organizations face challenges they are facing. In many different ways, the multi-university partnership can be seen as a consortium, because it was a strategic partnership created to help these three institutions overcome challenges that they were facing, which challenges in the words of Freeman were "changing everything around how we went about conducting our business." Responding to these challenges required "us to think differently, take risks, and be changes ourselves" according to Dawkins, whose point sounded similar to Usher's (2009) change agents idea of leaders who have to make change happen.

However, these change agents had to be equipped with leadership traits, which were necessary to achieve their goals. The literature revealed these traits to be the ability of a leader to lead (Kezar, 2009), to be of service to those they lead (Greenleaf, 1977), to encourage, motivate, and empower (Cox, 2001). In addition, these traits leaders have to be good collaborators (Fullan, 2011), and effective communicators (Ivic & Green, 2012). These same traits were observed in the results of this study, as expressed by participating leaders. In addition to these traits, personal connections to each other, and to their larger institution, were key traits that played important roles in terms of how successful these leaders were in relating to one another and proceeding in the partnership together. The next section will discuss limitations of this study.

Limitations

There were several limitations observed in this study. One of the limitations came from differences in the modes of interviewing, which affected how the researcher viewed, and interpreted results. For example, the researcher was able to see and could interpret body language, comfort, and discomfort levels of participants with whom the researcher had face-to-face interviews. With interviews conducted over the phone, or through online means, the researcher was unable to see body language, and expressions related to specific questions, or follow up questions. One good example related to question around factors that led leaders to decide whether or not to join the multi-university partner. The participants appeared uncomfortable with this question, especially when it came to the financial aspect of the partnership. Seeing the level of discomfort, as well as some pauses and hesitations in the leader that the researcher had face-to-face interviews with, the researcher was left wondering whether there were similar types of discomfort for the two participants who participated in remote interviews.

Another limitation to this study came from the fact that all three institutions studied were similar in terms of their background—all three were founded by the same umbrella institution, with very similar mission, and philosophical view of the world. This limitation may impact how the study could be replicated. Moreover, at the president level, there was a uniqueness in terms of time served, which averaged approximately 20 years of service. This length of service created a strong bond between the three presidents in terms of their collaboration and partnership, both as they related to the multi-university partnership, as well as other collaborative work they were doing together. Finally, there was only one, significant document available to the researcher that specifically spoke to the multi-university partnership. Although other institutional documents

existed, which were also accessible to the researcher, they focused on other aspects of each institution, and not necessarily on the multi-university partnership. The lack of data specific to the partnership hindered the ability of the researcher to have enough supporting data for triangulation.

Even though data collection was successful, because all the necessary data was collected by the researcher, the interview data may have had differences due to the different methods used for remote and on-site interviewing, but these differences did not affect data validity, nor its accuracy. The ideal situation was for the researcher to collect data using interviews via a face-to-face method, which was accomplished with one institution, but not with the other two institutions, because they were located in different parts of the country. Differences existed in term of the length between the face-to face and the electronically conducted interviews. The face-to-face interviews were much longer, and much rich in data. The difference was even more apparent for the few interviews that were conducted electronically via phone interviewing versus the interviews hosted using web conferencing.

The remote interviews could not provide data richness, facial expressions, and other forms of expressions that usually tell a story in face-to-face conversations. Location and geographic time differences presented another set of limitations. In addition, given the level of duties that each high-level position carried, interviews conducted using online means felt often rushed on the part of applicants. Because some of the interviews took place after work hours for some participants—at their requests—the researcher observed that for those participants, transcripts were shorter, because they provided shorter answers to initial questions, as well as follow up questions. Although questions were still answered, there was much less elaboration.

Moreover, limitations were observed in the form of similarities at the highest levels of leadership for all three institutions, and specifically in terms of the lens through which these leaders viewed and interpreted the world around them. Although the researcher expected these similarities at the institution level, given the background and values that the institutions stood for, it was surprising to see the similarities in terms of worldviews, goals, and mission at the individual leader's level. Learning about their personal connections; whether through their upbringing, or attending the same college while growing up, there was no surprise as far as the similarities that emerged in terms of how they viewed the world, and how their worldview was central to the formation and support of the multi-university partnership, and the mission the partnership was created to achieve. For most of these leaders whose age differences were not far apart, who had served their individual institutions for an average time of 20 years, during which time they had collaborated on many other projects, the researcher noticed many similarities rather than differences in terms of how they viewed and interpreted the academic world around them.

As already mentioned, another limitation to this study was the availability of documents relating specifically to the multi-university partnership. For various reasons, participants were not willing to share any electronic information in their possession, as it related to the partnership, as they all pointed to the same document, which was a memorandum of understanding, a document created by a steering committee that they put together to guide the work around the creation and support of this partnership. This particular document had some valuable information about the multi-university partnership, which included the reasons for its creation, and leaders involved in its creation. Additional information included how meetings were conducted, where meetings took place, when meetings happened, goals to be achieved, and

mission to be reached. Although all of this information was valuable and provided great insights, it was still not rich enough to provide additional data needed to support what leaders were saying in the interviews in terms of the process of collaboration, communication, and other key pieces as they related to answering the study question, and sub-questions. Although participants provided adequate information related to questions asked by the researcher, the was a missing depth related to specific questions, which almost all participants seemed to avoid as much as they could.

Furthermore, although there was general data available online, through each institution's website, this data provided very little content to support answering the study question, and sub-questions. However, documents as a way of collecting data are known to have many limitations. According to Robson (2002), although documents may be available, they may not have been written for the purpose of answering questions within a given study. Furthermore, even available documents may not be accessible for various reasons. In the case of this particular study, not only were there legal implications brought forth by participants who did not want to share any additional documents, the multi-university partnership in question has since dissolved, which further made an in-depth discussion of some aspects of the partnership more difficult.

As a result, there was reluctance on the part of participants to release documents related to the multi-university that they may have perceived as being impactful in terms of their continued relationship post the partnership, especially documents that had not been publicly released. This reluctance to release documents made sense because according to Kaplin and Lee (2014), "university-industry arrangements promote secrecy in order to serve industrial profit motives" (p. 825). However, to counter these limitations, the researcher was still able to collect

enough data through prolonged engagement, using member checking, researcher reflection and thick description, as well triangulation, which combined to help answer the study questions.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The major theory revealed in the literature was based on change, as a process through which organizations go in order to get from one stage, or state, into another. For this study, Kurt Lewin's theory of organizational change (1946) was reviewed, as well as (Kotter, 1996), and (Hiatt, 2006), who also talked about organizational change, and its impact relating to the process of changing from one state of being into another.

For this study, it took a particular type of change for each individual institution involved to go from a state of being and operating as an individual organization, into a new state of operating as part of a larger entity, in this case, the multi-university partnership. The partnership appeared to have been designed for partial and not full integration. This way of collaborating meant that each institution still maintained autonomy over a majority of its operations. It also meant that some departments like financial aid and admissions were fully integrated, while other departments maintained their independence and functioned outside of the rules established by the partnership.

The process of change was informed by many factors, meaning that change did not just happen because these leaders decided it was going to happen, but change happened because there were reasons, or reasons that prompted these leaders to act. In this case, change happened, because of the challenges that were being seen in the operating environment of higher education. According to Highlander, smaller, private institutions have to figure out a way to do things differently if they are going to survive, a point similar to what Puzziferro (2012) noted that survival of some higher education institutions depend on their ability to do business differently.

One of the ways in which these institutions are responding is through partnerships. Among the several reasons for the formation of this particular multi-university partnership are mission, and the changes in the current operating environment, as well as the ability of leadership to successfully drive change using different leadership styles.

In the end, what came out of the process of change, was a different product, which though still had the same institutions in its composition, looked completely different. This difference was due to the fact that individual institutions were no longer working independently to advance their individual mission and goals, but were rather working as a collective. Although each institution maintained some form of independence due to what appeared to have been partial integration, each still had to work within new settings and proceedings, which meant different goals for some departments, somewhat similar mission, different way of distributing resources, and a somewhat different vision, which was no longer individual, but collective.

In terms of practice and policy, the results from this research showed what it took to create something as crucial as a partnership between three institutions. The results showed that it does not take just a single leadership style to achieve this level of collaboration, but that it takes a combination of many styles of leading. The results also showed that prioritizing personnel is important, because of the role that both leaders and subordinates play in advancing both mission, and vision. Therefore, as policies are being created, change agents who are in charge of creating policies and executing them, have to create them with those they lead in mind, because of the impact that policies have on subordinates, and how they ultimately affect entire organizations (Burnes, 2004).

Moreover, the results clearly revealed the importance of these three institutions having more similarities than differences. Shared foundational and philosophical values seemed to have

played a big role in the success they witnessed and enjoyed, as they went through the process of creating this multi-university partnership. The result revealed that these shared values were instrumental in terms of creating guiding policies, because all three institutions were building from the same mission, and working from the same vision, which made it easier for them to agree on many more aspects of the partnership than they disagreed.

Recommendations for Further Research

The literature review revealed the challenges and struggles faced by higher education institutions, especially in the age of technological advances. These changes are forever altering not only how education is viewed and delivered, but also how higher education institutions operate. As a result of such changes in the environment within which these institutions operate, predictions have been made that unless these institutions figure out different ways of operating, adapting to their new realities, many will be doomed to fail and close their doors for good (Woodhouse, 2015). As a result, one key area where the literature review greatly emphasized on was in education institutions partnering together to share resources, reduce cost of operation, and therefore keep their doors open.

Ultimately, keeping their doors open to continue advancing their mission seemed to have been the true goal of the three institutions that came together to create this multi-university partnership. Although there were several positive outcomes that resulted from the creation of the partnership, as expressed by leaders who were involved in the process, and appreciated the work that had been done, in the end, the partnership did not survive much longer than the conclusion of this study. It ended just a couple of years into its creation. For such a partnership, which was highly regarded as the potential answer to the academic and ultimately economic challenges faced by all three institutions involved, not to survive its first couple of years, the researcher's

recommendation would be to further review why this multi-university partnership, which seemed highly promising, did not survive.

This is especially important given the level of shared faith, values, and vision that was apparent throughout. Based on traits, as well as factors that emerged from the data that appeared to have influenced the multi-university partnership, it was not enough to say that this partnership did not just work. There was too much conviction on the part of each leader who participated in the formation and support of this partnership, that this was not only the right way to proceed, but given the fact that these institutions and leaders shared so much in common, in the words of Briggs, "brothers in faith, which goes decades, because of our values and faith philosophy," it was much more. If it had been just a group of institutions without any historical ties, the dissolution could have been explained with a little bit of ease.

However, for this particular case, given the seemingly strong foundational beliefs, values, vision, and mission, as expressed by all the participants, the researcher was left wondering about what else was at play, which was not revealed. Was it the model itself that was not well-thought through? Were the foundational values that were expressed good enough to sustain individual institutions, but not a collective? Was the fact that individual institutions started at different places financially and in terms of online footprint the reason? There is definitely more to explore about this particular partnership, and why it dissolved. In this next section, the researcher will provide a conclusion to this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out what leadership factors and traits led to, and supported the formation of a multi-university partnership between three faith-based higher education institutions. The following sub-questions were included:

1. What type of individual leadership style(s) was (were) prominent within the leadership of each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
2. In what ways did the style(s) reflect their collective, and institution style(s)?
3. What influences the leader(s) decision-making process?
4. What influenced the decision-making process of each individual leaders, and as a collective, within each institution, as it relates to the partnership?
5. How did individual leaders within each institution, and as a collective group, make decisions in relation to the partnership?

Several leadership traits and factors emerged, which influenced the decision by these three institutions' leaders to create and support the multi-university partnership. These traits cut across all leadership styles, which included servant, transformational, business, and situational leadership styles. They included the ability of leaders to lead both their subordinates, as well as others who were part of the same working group, as it related to the partnership, the ability to empower others, which included their followers as well as those with whom they collaborated, and their ability to care for their subordinates. They also included relation building both internally and externally, and the ability to effectively communicate and collaborate.

In addition to traits, there were also factors that contributed to the formation of the multi-university partnership. These factors could be categorized into two different categories; mission and changes in the current environment of operating in higher education. Mission focused on a history of shared faith, and values that all three institutions shared as a result of being founded under the same umbrella institution. Mission further included the desire to continue advancing the mission of a Christ-centered education to the world, while helping a struggling church in the process, which has seen a decline in its membership. Changes in the current environment

focused on challenges, both economic and technological, that have impacted how education is delivered, and have forever altered how higher education institutions operate.

In addition to shared faith and values, as well as existing relationships at the all leadership levels, it was clear that length of service mattered a great deal. Length of service was one of the key factors that greatly contributed to the willingness of leaders taking what most of them perceived to be a risky decision to join the multi-university partnership. It mattered that leaders at the president level not only knew each other as serving under the same mission as a result of being founded by the same umbrella institution; it also mattered that some had attended the same school and even had family members who had served the institutions before them, and who knew each other. Even more importantly, it mattered that the average length of service between the presidents was about 20 years. The presidents seemed to have a wealth of institutional knowledge, as it related to their respective institutions, but also as it related to the mission under which they were entrusted to advance, which knowledge served them well as they got together to make what was perceived as crucial decisions for their individual institutions.

There are challenges currently facing higher education institutions. Given the constant search by higher education institutions for solutions to adapt to these challenges, especially those that have no endowments, are private, and that rely on tuition for survival, this study was important. The significance of this study came its focus on how three such institutions tried to find ways to adapt to these challenges. These institutions chose to proceed through the creation of a multi-university partnership, which in the literature referred to as *consortia* (Davies & Kennedy, 2009). Although partnerships have happened before, the uniqueness of this particular partnership came from the personalities involved, the shared philosophy, values and faith.

This particular partnership may not have survived beyond its intended timeline, but it was apparent to the researcher that participants possessed a desire, passion, and conviction that what was being pursued went beyond individual leaders and institutions. The partnerships' creation was something new for these three institutions, something that had never been attempted before. Had the partnership succeeded, could have meant so much more to each institution involved and the very church upon which the institutions were founded. Just because this particular multi-university partnership did not work should not automatically mean no further attempts could be made, or future attempts would fail. As stated by Freeman, "this was a first step."

Participants expressed a high sense of conviction that although this first attempt did not go according to plan, this first trial ended being viewed as a learning step. The researcher assessment is that participants saw the dissolution not as a failure, because leaders from these three institutions could not get along, but rather because the design was not the right design in terms of how they proceeded. This assessment was constant across all levels of leadership.

For the researcher, the three institutions have a strong historical connection, which if used right may help them design a better a way of successfully implementing a partnership. However, the same historical and the personal connections, especially at the highest levels of leadership may have overshadowed the realities of the challenges associated with creating such partnerships. These leaders were focused mainly on what their institutions shared in common, and gave little thought to the challenges related to their differences. These differences were in their geographic locations, the diversity of the students they were trying to reach, the differences in cultural norms at each of their institutions, which impacted the inter-institutional, inter-departmental collaborations that were needed to advance the mission of the partnership. In the

end, a combination of several internal and external forces highlighted the differences that existed between the three institutions, and were too strong for what they shared in common to overcome.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Part I. Individual Leadership/attributes Questions

1. What does leadership mean to you, and how would you describe your leadership style?
2. How would you describe your overall institution's guiding leadership style?
3. What influence (if any) do you think your leadership style had on crucial institutional decisions?
4. What leadership factors, such as values, vision, goals, and objectives, influence your decisions? In what ways did those factors affect your decision to support your institution joining the CU partnership?
5. What would you say are the values of inter-institutional partnerships?
6. In what ways (positive or negative) has the partnership affect your leadership style?

Part II. Process Questions

7. How did the decision to join the partnership come about?
8. What were the reasons behind that decision to join in?

Part III. Framework Related Questions

9. What does survivability, sustainability, and/or mission attainment mean to you? Your institution as a whole?
10. In what ways did survivability, sustainability, and/or mission attainment play a role in your decision to join the partnership?

Appendix B: Components of Research Designs

1. A case study's questions
2. Its propositions
3. Unit(s) of analysis
4. The logic linking data to the propositions
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings

Appendix C: Example of MLQ—Leader Form

My Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. **If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.** Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word "others" may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

Use the following rating scale: **Not at all**	**Once in a while**	**Sometimes**	**Fairly often**	**Frequently, if not always**
0	1	2	3	4

1. I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts 0 1 2 3 4
2. I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate 0 1 2 3 4
3. I fail to interfere until problems become serious 0 1 2 3 4
4. I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards 0 1 2 3 4
5. I avoid getting involved when important issues arise 0 1 2 3 4
6. I talk about my most important values and beliefs 0 1 2 3 4
7. I am absent when needed 0 1 2 3 4
8. I seek differing perspectives when solving problems 0 1 2 3 4
9. I talk optimistically about the future 0 1 2 3 4
10. I instill pride in others for being associated with me 0 1 2 3 4
11. I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets 0 1 2 3 4
12. I wait for things to go wrong before taking action 0 1 2 3 4
13. I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.....0 1 2 3 4
14. I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose 0 1 2 3 4
15. I spend time teaching and coaching 0 1 2 3 4

Appendix D: Codes

Levels	Leadership	Decision-making	Purpose	Emerging
President	Goals, Standards, Actions, Encourage, Empower, Motivate, Relationship, Coalition, Develop others, Lead, Humility, Role Model, Ethics, Visionary, Service, Transform, Business	Wisdom, Facilitation, Adaptability, Team approach, Consensus, Committee, Change, Together	Mission, Vision, Spreading kingdom, Current environment, Sustainability, Success, Faith, Grater growth, Technology, Politics	Shared history, Beginning, Serving others, Stranger together, Cost efficiency, Finances, Brick to click
Provost	Service, Service to others, Empowering, Encouraging, Self-sacrifice, Equal voice, Team, Leading by example, Business, Transformational Caring, Coaching, Decisiveness	Collective decision-making, Facilitating process, working committee, Collaboration at all level, Teamwork, Communication, Working group, Keeping team informed	Visio, Christ-centered, Mission, Changing environment, Passion for mission, Founding faith, Impact the world, Technology, Pedagogy,	A declining church, Shared history and faith, Same roots, Brand, Cost, Education to share Christ, Arms of the church
Third level	Service, Serving others, Make others better, Listen to others, Visionary, Business, Equal importance, Care, Mentor others, Develop others, Humility	Build, Support, Communication, Strong synergy, A sense of belonging, Equal participation, Strong collaboration, Consensus	Mission, A strong vision, Service to others, Adaptability to changing environment, Philosophy, Technology, Changing political landscape, Community	Social justice, Brand, Shared history, Declining church

Appendix E: MLQ Permission

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Appendix F: Statement of Original Work

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> **Statement of academic integrity.**
>
> As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.
>
> **Explanations:**
>
> ***What does "fraudulent" mean?***
>
> "Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.
>
> ***What is "unauthorized" assistance?***
>
> "Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:
>
> - Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
> - Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
> - Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
> - Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

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