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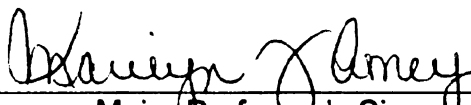
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**BLENDED FAMILIES: THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND
MANAGERIAL CULTURE IN MERGERS OF CAREER-ORIENTED COLLEGES**

By

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ABSTRACT

BLENDED FAMILIES: THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGERIAL CULTURE IN MERGERS OF CAREER-ORIENTED COLLEGES

By

Michael W. Wambach

This qualitative case study is constructed to offer insight on the infrequently investigated influence of organizational culture before and after a merger between higher education institutions. Respondents were selected from volunteers to form three strata of employees; staff, mid-level management which included some faculty members, and upper level administration. Each subject was a member of the pre-merger organization for at least three years to establish full enculturation. The interviews were conducted four years after the merger. The methodology included having each respondent draw a picture of how they perceived working at the pre-merger organization and another picture depicting how they perceived working in the merged organization.

The results show that communication, especially incongruence between administrative actions and the values espoused by leadership, during a merger process is crucial to assimilation of pre-merger culture and development of the merged entity's culture. In addition, employees lower in the organizational hierarchy demonstrated greater concern for the personal effects of retrenchment actions than did those in middle and upper administrative levels. Another salient finding is that leadership should treat culture as a constantly evolving element within an organization. When leadership treats culture development as simply another project, separated from other aspects of organizational life, it is less likely to meet with success.

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Chapter One: Introduction

It has become almost cliché to refer to the present pressures, conflicts, and changes that confront American higher education as posing a unique set of circumstances, which threaten the very foundations of this venerable industry. Cliché perhaps, but it is not hyperbole to say that an array of both internal and external factors has aligned in a fashion that foretells an imminent and seminal reorientation of higher education to its societal stakeholders. In essence, a “perfect storm” has formed, characterized by increased demand, decreased resources, calls for greater accountability of its product, change in the economic basis of our society, and questions relative to the core of higher education’s mission of research, teaching, and service to the community it serves. Indeed, the very nature of what constitutes the “community” of any one college or university can be called into question. Whatever the outcome of this transformative process, the industry emerging on the lee side of this gale will be quite different than the one that entered on the windward.

Industries in other sectors of our economy like banking, pharmaceuticals, retail grocery, hospitals, and manufacturing have been, and continue to be, buffeted by competitive and economic factors just as profound to their survival as the ones currently facing higher education. One of the methods frequently used by other industries to adapt and grow in a hostile environment is a full-asset merger (Augwin, 2001; Post, 1994; Weston, 1999). Despite financial circumstances that have organizations in other industries utilizing merger to a greater extent, higher education has not often embraced

this organizational coping tool as a method of institutional survival or growth. It would seem that the unique culture of higher education organizations makes them more resistant to embracing merger as a strategy either to avoid financial adversity or to grow in diversity (Cannon, 1983).

The facet of organizational life that provides significant insight to the mechanisms of how its members make sense of the events taking place is its culture. This ability of a group's culture to help *make sense* is important for it allows the individual and the group to deal with environmental turbulence and internal irrationalities, thereby responding and accommodating the organizational change that results. Edgar Schein (2004) argues that a better understanding of the deeper, complex anthropological models of culture will allow greater insight into the hidden and intricate nature of organizational life. Although organizations may exist in physical structures, be legal entities, operate as economic engines, or occupy a place in the civic community, they are created, populated, and operated by people. I propose that the stories and experiences of the organization's people as they deal with the abrupt and far-reaching cultural events brought about by merger are the methods to deciphering the culture of the organization in flux.

Organizations undergoing mergers have their cultures affected in ways that might be called a "shock to the system." It is even more traumatic than organizational closure, since, with the closure, the culture ceases and its remnants are carried by members to new organizations. It is as if the action of merger to an organization's culture is like a proton that has been accelerated to nearly the speed of light in a cyclotron. When the proton hits the target nucleus, that nucleus displays its elemental particles, which, without the collision, would never have been seen. Both the proton and the nucleus are changed. So

too can the disruption of merger display aspects of organizational culture that might have remained hidden or barely perceived without the merger action. It must be appreciated that the organizational disruptions inherent to merger are not simply affecting this abstract construction we call an organization, but they affect the people who occupy the organization and, through whose actions, make the organization come to life.

Insights into the development of organizational culture in mergers between American higher education institutions are under-developed in the literature. Indeed, the ethnographic or anthropological approach to investigations in higher education administration itself are so sparse that Wisniewski (2000) calls for a renewal of ethnographical research having to do with the operation of the academy. Some of the few who have contributed include, most notably, an examination of institutional culture on change strategy ((Kezar, 2002) and the same authors' investigation into the institutional transformation process (Kezar, 2000). Siegel and Carchidi (1996) use an ethnographic approach to study the creation of a boundary spanning organization within a major research university and Goldsmith (1995) also used ethnographic techniques to describe the start of a new university. While organizational culture played an important role in the aforementioned studies, they were not undertaken for the study of higher education culture per se. When the development of institutional culture during mergers in higher education is addressed, it is usually tangential to the primary investigation of financial or policy implications or without the conceptual grounding found in the work of leading investigators of organizational culture.

There are many perspectives that can be taken to examine a merger event between organizations. Among these perspectives are the financial, managerial, policymaking,

strategic planning, and governance dimensions. I posit that a cultural approach, one that examines the actual perceptions and stories of the people involved, offers the best opportunity to perceive the event's realities for organizational culture. At its deepest levels, organizational culture manifests those things that are "taken for granted and are treated as nonnegotiable" (Schein, 2004 p. 16), forming the basis through which the other aforementioned dimensions is perceived. The purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore the development of organizational culture in higher education institutional mergers by examining the shared experiences of strata of executive, mid-level academic and staff professionals. Despite a low incidence of mergers occurring in American higher education, they do take place. This study investigates the organizational culture development that takes place from the perspective of this cross-section of people. The significance of this study is that it gives higher education institutions a better understanding of organizational culture development in the merger process. This is likely to have greater importance for if the current financial hardships worsen or continue for a longer period, exigent colleges and universities may be forced to use merger as a survival tool with more frequency than it has been traditionally used in American higher education.

Problem Statement

Mergers in American higher education are not a frequent occurrence, yet they could become more common if the present pressures of decreasing state funding, increasing student demand, societal expectations of greater access, increased calls for accountability, sharper competition, and the maturing of the information age in the context of a global economy continue at their present pace. Colleges and universities will

seek to use new learning technologies, re-orient their internal programs and processes, and eliminate perceived waste in the pursuit of meeting those demands. Those institutions that find themselves unable to accommodate the new environment through these actions may find that merger with another institution is necessary or desired in order to compete and survive.

Despite the fact that few mergers between higher education institutions have occurred in the United States, they could reasonably increase in number in the future. There are few investigations into the development of organizational culture in the merger between higher education institutions in the United States and there are no studies identified that take an ethnographic approach to the stories, representations, and experiences of those involved in the merger process. The purpose of this study is to explore the organizational culture development that occurs when there is a merger between higher education institutions from the perspective of academic and operational professionals' experiences with the event. The questions to be addressed are:

1. When higher education organizations merge, what is the influence of organizational culture?
2. What are the perceptions of the academic and operational professionals to the cultural changes of a merged higher education institution?
3. How do these professionals deal with the congruence and incongruence between artifacts, espoused values, and the basic assumptions of organizational culture?

In the next chapter of this study I will explore the literature related to higher education culture that might bear on merger situations, the analogies of health care mergers to those in college or universities, and mergers in higher education, both in the

U.S. and internationally. Chapter Three will detail a three-part methodology, which includes interviews, respondent drawings, and institutional document analysis, used to investigate the research questions at three separate colleges that recently merged into a university. In Chapter Four I will present the data derived from this methodology in a narrative format. The last chapter will present analysis of the insights derived from the data in a manner consistent with the conceptual framework and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The few investigations into the development of organizational culture in higher education mergers require a reorientation to the literature on organizational culture in general, specifically in higher education, a search for analogous situations in other industries that can reasonably be inferred to higher education, and then an exploration of investigations into higher education mergers themselves. The literature will be reviewed to establish the need to explore the culture of merged higher education institutions in an ethnographic manner in the following way: (1) a review of organizational culture; (2) how organizational culture is perceived in higher education institutions, together with an examination of whether higher education resembles other industries or not; (3) an extension into mergers and cultural change in the health care industry under the supposition that health care closely resembles higher education as an industry; (4) an exploration of those investigations dealing with higher education mergers and the influence of organizational culture, both in the United States and internationally; and (5) an examination of the current financial and competitive pressures facing higher education and how institutional merger is under-appreciated in American higher education.

Organizational Culture

The culture of any institution is an unusual construct. The term culture is useful only if it helps shed light on the complex and buried features of organizational life. Given the often-abstract nature of organizational culture, it is necessary to review what leading scholars and theorists say about organizational culture and how it is manifest in organizational life. Several orientations exist in attempting to answer the question “what is culture?” Each orientation depends on the discipline through which the investigator

views the question. Ironically, how one defines culture depends on the culture of the person.

From a more historic aspect, the social science and anthropological disciplines, Kroeber (1958) calls culture, “transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artifacts produced through that behavior” (p. 583). Smircich (1985) describes culture as “an attribute or quality internal to a group. In this sense culture is a possession - a fairly stable set of taken-for-granted assumptions, shared beliefs, meanings, and values that form a kind of backdrop for action” (p. 58). Kunda (1992) aligns with the synthesis of other authors by saying that culture is “a learned body of tradition that governs what one needs to know, think, and feel in order to meet the standards of membership” (p.8).

Hofstede (1984) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group to another” (p. 25). He constructs a hierarchy of culture distribution that he terms “mental programs”, which are described as similar in construct to intangible forces of physics (p. 14). On the universal level there are mental programming commonalities that are shared by nearly all people. The generally held human prohibitions against cannibalism or incest might fit this universal category. The collective levels of mental programs are shared by those in a certain group or category, which could be regional, ethnic, or organizational. Lastly is the individual level; the mental programs of no two people are exactly alike. Hofstede differentiates the individual level as being populated by a person’s values, which are “a broad tendency to

prefer certain states of affairs over others” (p. 19). Hofstede uses culture as the term applying to expressions of commonality at the collective level.

These earlier social science and anthropological meanings of culture have exerted influence over those who have investigated culture as it applies to organizations. Schein (2004) defines culture as, “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 12). This definition of organizational reality is then divided into three elements that Schein describes as (1) the procedures of socialization (how a new member learns about the culture), (2) the display of behavior (how behavior becomes the overt indicator of organizational culture as detected by identification of behavioral artifacts), and (3) multiple cultures within a single organization (organizations, especially large ones, do have common assumptions about responses, but can develop subcultures that may be in conflict with each other). This last element has increased significance for higher education with its divisions along lines of governance, administration, staff, faculty, disciplines, and students, which can create strong subcultures. Schein also introduces a comprehensive description of the processes by which the levels of culture become established. These elements are: (1) artifacts – the visible organizational structures, symbols, and processes; (2) espoused values – the strategies, goals, philosophies, and other espoused justifications for an organization’s actions; and (3) basic underlying assumptions – those unconscious beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that become the source of values and actions.

Gareth Morgan (1997) elaborates on the creation of an organizational reality theme by stating that organizational culture is, “a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways” (p. 138). These aspects of organizational life are then either followed or enacted by the members as a basis for making their behavior sensible and meaningful. Both Schein’s (2004) and Morgan’s viewpoints appear to be influenced by earlier investigators in the field of anthropology, who derive their perspective on culture from the studies of communities, ethnic groups, and regional societies.

The perspective used to study culture is also important for it provides a basis on which interpretations and conclusions are made. Myerson and Martin (1987) describe several perspectives on culture. The first is the integrative perspective, which looks for the consistencies across cultural features. The second is the differentiation approach, which views cultural features as mainly inconsistent with each other. The third is the fragmentation perspective, which accepts that pure consistencies and pure inconsistencies are seldom found in cultural features, resulting in a focus on the ambiguities within the features (Meyerson, 1987). Taking this idea one step further, Wilson (1997) adds that any culture has parts that can only be understood when all three of Myerson and Martin’s perspectives are used, although some subcultures may view events from a particular perspective. The culmination of these three cultural perspectives is that there is general agreement by all on only a few, fundamental issues (integrative), while only certain subcultures agree on others (differentiation), and a state of ambiguity exists for the remainder (fragmentation).

In the loosely bounded organizational behaviorist discipline, the idea to view organizational culture through the perspective of frames was introduced by Bolman and Deal (1997). As such, each frame suggests the orientation, interpretive basis, and biases of its particular school of thought. The frames consist of:

1. The structural frame – derived principally from sociology with an emphasis on the formal roles and structures as illustrated by divisions of labor, rules, policies, and hierarchies used to coordinate and control activities.
2. The human resource frame – originating primarily from social psychology that suggests the individuals of an organization have feelings, needs, skills, limitations, and prejudices. From this frame the organization needs to be formed around these attributes in a manner that will get the job done.
3. The political frame – contribution from the field of political science that views the culture as a competition between interest groups for power and resources. Actions are interpreted as bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise both within and between these interest groups.
4. The symbolic frame – Started through social and cultural anthropology, it minimizes the rationalism of the other frames and views culture more through the rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths than by rules, politics, or authority. In essence it is the organization as theater where the actors either play their parts well or poorly, symbols gain or lose meaning, and rituals conform to or are incongruent to the processes they represent. Rituals and ceremony provide ways of taking meaningful action in the face of ambiguity, unpredictability, and threat.

(p. 270)

It should be stressed that Bolman and Deal (1997) do not describe the frames as discrete entities onto themselves, but as a set of lenses through which events or circumstances are viewed. A particular event receives four different interpretations, depending on the frame used. A more sophisticated interpretation of the frames is that the manager or researcher needs to use multiple, overlapping frames to view or shape organizational actions. Bolman and Deal call this deeper cognitive and affective activity the development of stencils, stating that, “With multiple stencils, managers, consultants, and policymakers can make use of different frames, blending them into a coherent, pragmatic, personal theory of organizations” (p. 19). While frames and stencils are a valid and powerful synthesis of multiple concepts, Bolman and Deal portray organizational culture primarily as symbols, myths, rituals and theater. Schein (2004) calls these more superficial features cultural artifacts, which form the first part of a deeper mosaic that includes espoused values and basic underlying assumptions. These deeper elements form the actual manner by which a person perceives and makes sense of reality, in other words, a person’s paradigm. What Bolman and Deal underemphasize in their description of cultural frames is the powerful effect culture can have in creating the reality and shaping the lens of the other three frames.

What the organizational behaviorists, the social scientists, and the anthropologists have in common regarding the definition of culture is that it involves commonalities of thought and perception that lead to certain ways of behavior, and these thoughts or perceptions are often formed and/or represented through values, assumptions, or symbols. In addition, the manner by which culture is perceived influences its perception. This

could be through viewing culture as differentiated, integrated, or fragmented (Myerson and Martin, 1987) or through frames and stencils (Bolman and Deal, 1997).

Schein (2004) asserts that an organization's culture is a powerful, often underappreciated force. It is a force that shapes the actions, behaviors, and senses by which the organizational member develops a version of reality. Thus, culture becomes a metaphor for viewing and interpreting events in an organization. There are both strengths and limitations to the use of culture as a metaphor. An examination of those strengths and weaknesses is necessary to support the use of culture identification, change, or conflict as a valid framework in the investigation of profound organizational events like merger.

One of the strengths in using culture as a metaphor is that it takes the most concrete and rational aspects of organizations such as hierarchies, rules, and routines, and recasts them as social constructions that are indispensable for people to understanding of how the organization functions on a daily basis (Morgan, 1997). Without the symbolism of culture, the member is left without a guide to the human element behind the technical, the rational, and the statistical. Not knowing, or worse, not understanding the cultural framework for behavior lessens the member's effectiveness.

A second strength of the cultural metaphor is that it demonstrates the need in any collective activity for a shared system of meaning to frame and continuously reframe the meaning of the organization's interpretive schemes and actions. Morgan (1997) demonstrates the advantage of the cultural metaphor when he concludes that, "Under mechanical and organismic metaphors, primary emphasis tends to be placed on the importance of organizational *design*: the design of organizational structures or the design of adaptive processes. The culture metaphor points toward another means of creating and

shaping organized activity by influencing the ideologies, values, beliefs, language, norms, ceremonies, and other social practices that ultimately shape and guide organized action” (p. 147). Senge (1990) makes the point that it is not enough for the shared vision of the organization to be held by each person individually, but that the vision must be shared collectively so that the members gain an important interpersonal connection with each other. It is by this act of being shared by all members that vision becomes a legitimate part of an organization’s culture, consistent with Schein’s (2004) definition of culture.

A third strength of the cultural metaphor is that it highlights the socially constructed connections between the organization and its external environment (Morgan, 1997). In other words, organizations do not simply respond to the environment. They act purposefully, regarding the nature and structure of society and, through these actions, influence their external environment. For example, a university that decides to open a law school believes that it is responding to a real need for that school in its community. But, by opening that school it also changes the social environment of both the legal industry and the larger public community in its region. The university is a contributor to the shape of change in its external environment, not merely a reactor to it. Other ways that organizations shape their external environments have to do with the pronouncements on what they choose to do or how they intend to operate. Organizational statements of mission, goals, and values are not only choices about fields of operation, but goal-related statements of what are to be achieved in those fields. By making these goal statements, the organization is placing a certain shape and influence on the external environment.

Simultaneously, other organizations are shaping their external environments by making qualitative statements related to their mission, values, and goals.

By linking Morgan's (1991) third cultural metaphor strength of socially shaping the environment through extensions of organizational culture to his first strength of culture as metaphor, the influence of social construction over concrete, rational thought, one can better appreciate the effects of story, rumor, myth, or shared perception, whether rational or not, upon the undulations in the stock market. A second, even more powerful example, of organizational culture influencing society is illustrated by the company Newman's Own. All post-tax profits of the company are donated to charity. Before Newman's Own, the idea of a company donating all of its post-tax profits to charity was not seen as rational in business circles. Not only has the social landscape been shaped through the direct effects of contributions to the charities involved, but also the very idea of a company operating in this fashion has created a new mode of philanthropic operations between private industry and charitable organizations. Thus, the particular cultural attributes of an organization influence the larger society (Blumenthal, 1999).

The last strength of using organizational culture as a metaphor is it provides insight into organizational change. The change process has been thought of as a function of modifying technologies, structures, and/or abilities of employees (Morgan, 1991). While these are certainly factors in the change process, they would likely be ineffective without the changes in the symbols and attitudes that accompany cultural change (Morgan, 1997). I offer the experience of the railroad industry of the United States as an example of the inability of changing technologies and environmental structures to produce industry change due to the symbolic and attitudinal culture of that industry. From

its inception in the 1830's to the early 1900's, railroads held the premier position as *the* mover of people and freight in this country. By the early years of the twentieth century, two entirely new technologies consisting of automobile and air travel were emerging. The dominance and financial resources of the railroad industry made it a natural to transform itself and enter these new markets. However, the organizational culture and social context of railroads were wholly centric on railroading itself. The newcomers were viewed as competitors or fads, not potential partners. Had railroads seen their cultural context as that of a transportation industry, of which trains were simply one component, we might be living in an entirely different country – driving a B&O and flying on Chessie Airlines.

While culture as a metaphor for the shared values, vision, and social architecture of an organization has its advantages, there are also limitations to the concept. First is the use of organizational culture change as a tool to manipulate the ideology of the organization. Instead of attempting to develop a network of shared meaning with linkage to values, visions, and patterns of behavior that embraces the collective knowledge and beliefs of its members, culture is sometimes used to impose a managerial hegemony on its members. This becomes, in essence, a *values engineering* process (Morgan, 1997). Actions like this can be seen in organizational leadership attempts to impose a lexicon of terms or labels that run counter to the perceptions of the members and actually change the rule of social interaction. As Ogbor (2001) states,

When loyalty to the organization becomes a substitute for living one's own life, when the organization enhances its centrality in the lives of its employees, and when we accept unfreedom as freedom, the indoctrination can become so powerful that the emotional refusal to go along appears neurotic. (p. 605)

One glaring illustration of this is the overuse of the term *team* and its various connotations of teamwork and being a team player. An over-emphasis on the notion that teams should always be cooperative can lead to cynicism and the suppression of conflict necessary to develop the best response to a particular problem or situation. Thus, the eventual inability to discern true conflict from phony conflict (the failure to manage agreement) leads to decisions and actions that hinder the organization's attainment of goals (Harvey, 1988).

A second limitation comes from the very action of attempting to observe, describe, and relate to phenomena. Since organizational culture is self-generating and will occur regardless of either conscious or unconscious attempts to shape it, any observation of it will be a snapshot abstraction (Morgan, 1997) where the outside observer imposes an interpretation on the discernible pattern of events, symbols, and behaviors. Observations from outside the organization cannot convey exactly the same sense of culture that one has from living it.

The third limitation has to do with the ability of the observer to discriminate between the "hype" of organizational culture and the deeper richness of meaning that surrounds the fundamental behaviors, symbols, language, stories, and rituals embodied by the underlying cultural patterns of the institution ((Morgan, 1997). Morgan concludes that,

In studies of organizational culture, enactment is usually seen as a voluntary process under the direct influence of the actors involved. This view can be important in empowering people to take greater responsibility for their world by recognizing that they play an important part in the construction of their realities.

But it can be misleading to the extent that it ignores the stage on which the enactment occurs. We all construct or enact our realities but not necessarily under circumstances of our own choosing. (p. 152)

In spite of the specified limitations of culture as a metaphor for organizational activities, the literature shows that examining an organization's culture provides a reliable indication of its purpose, values, vision, and operational dynamics. The primacy of using culture as the lens through which to view an organization's constructed realities is given additional credence by Rosen (1991). Rosen comments on the perception of reality in any social process in saying that,

Culture is built on the edge. That which appears to be objective – the naturalness of formal organization, the structuring of hierarchies, the immutability of economic laws, nine innings to a baseball game, the stability of order – is only illusionary so, where fronts are actively maintained through management of common backstages of meaning. Reality is actively socially constructed. (p. 273)

Certainly there are other methods of examining these facets such as organizational design, hierarchy, financial statistics, and operational processes, but the reality-making lens of organizational culture shapes these facets. These other methods also tend to ignore the human dimension of the enterprise. In that human dimension lie the intrinsic social connections and interactions that characterize the uniqueness of the organization, both internally and externally through its relationships to a larger society. It is that uniqueness that sets one organization apart from others and provides for the rich diversity of human groupings we call organizations. Because of its ability to discern a reliable form of organizational realities, the examination of organizational culture can serve as a valid

metaphor and method of ascertaining what happens to institutions that engage in a merger.

Organizational Culture in Higher Education

The discussion of organizational culture to this point has been generally framed as applying to commercial organizations. However, colleges and universities are organizations, too. Presumably, they are subject to the same internal and external forces that create, develop and change organizational culture in other categories of enterprise. Indeed, an ongoing controversy in postsecondary education is the extent to which colleges and universities resemble their non-academic counterparts. First, I will examine key research investigating higher education culture. Second, since this study looks at how mid-level administrators perceive institutional culture in a merger, I will discuss organizational culture's effects in leadership and managerial processes. Third, I will explore both those who view the academy (and its culture) as not resembling its commercial counterparts and those who feel that higher education resembles conventional business.

In the literature more specific to the overall study of culture in higher education, Tierney (1988) states the organizational culture of a college or university "as if the institution were an interconnected web that cannot be understood unless one looks not only at the structure and natural laws of that web, but also at the actor's interpretations of the web itself" (p. 4). Masland (2000) describes higher education institutional culture saying, "Organizational culture induces purpose, commitment, and order; provides meaning and social cohesion; and clarifies and explains behavioral expectations" (p. 145). As such, Tierney's and Masland's definition of culture, as they apply to institutions

of higher education, are consistent with those of the sociological and anthropological literature.

In a study that examined institutional culture, decision making, and institutional effectiveness, Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) relate four culture types. First is the clan culture, which encourages affiliation and participatory decision making. Second is the adhocracy culture, which concludes that change is inevitable and individuals are motivated to address tasks by their importance or appeal. Third is the bureaucratic culture that seeks stability and is governed by rules and linear strategy. Fourth is the market culture, which emphasizes an achievement orientation, planning, productivity, and efficiency in decisions. Smart et al. found that the clan and adhocracy cultures were better associated with effectiveness in higher education organizations, while the bureaucratic culture was least effective. This can have implications in a higher education merger situation for incompatibilities in the culture between merging partners could influence how the merger plays out.

Although there are many and varied references to the theoretical underpinnings that describe higher education organizational culture in the literature, the one that I believe best captures the depth and comprehensiveness is Weick (1976) and his use of loose coupling as a way to conceptualize the culture of the academy. The essential idea of coupling is that each coupled event (an action, organizational unit, position, or person in that position can be an event) not only interacts with other events, but each event retains some aspect of distinction from the others. This distinction may be physical or represented by a difference in function (Weick, 1976). For example, the university's accounts payable office is coupled to the office of admissions. The admissions office

needs the accounts payable office to process invoices for the supplies it needs. The accounts payable depends on admissions to enroll sufficient tuition-paying students to maintain cash flow so that invoices can be processed. These offices interact; yet have their own identities and logical separateness. The degree of coupling is based on the frequency and strength of the variables the two events (systems) share. If there are few variables in common or the variables are weak, the coupling is looser. The element of time must also be considered as events may be coupled to different degrees at different points in time (Weick, 1976).

Loose coupling as a way of making sense of higher education organization and culture offers many advantages. Among the more salient: (1) Loose coupling allows some portion of the organization to persist even when there are disagreements among other portions. In this way, the biology department is not likely to be immediately closed because it is in disagreement with the provost. (2) Loose coupling implies that the more semi-independent portions are to the organization, the better they can sense their particular connections with the external environment. An academic discipline would not sense this connection to its larger external discipline as well if it were tightly coupled to other internal organizational units. (3) Loose coupling can be a good way for the larger organization to meet widely variable external demands through the responses of its components (Weick, 1976). For example, a university corporate service's office could meet an immediate community need without undue disruption to the other parts of the organization.

Another major contribution by Weick to the study of culture and organizations comes from his description of a model for organizing (Scott, 2003). He postulates that

people organize to help manage the uncertainty of information in their lives. The steps involved in this organizing process. The first is enactment, where interacting individuals construct a picture of their environment and their situation. The second is selection, in which people selectively attend and interact with what is going on around them and make sense of it through common interpretation and common meaning. The third is retention, in which the common responses are selected and retained because they are more useful than others. This model also appears to be compatible with Schein's (2004) description of culture as well as his three components of culture (artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions). It can also be deduced that loose coupling in higher education makes the development of subcultures, as suggested by Schein, more likely.

Organizational Culture, Management, and Leadership

The traits and behaviors of leadership in higher education have ambiguous characteristics that influence institutional culture. This conclusion that “academic management is an ambiguous process, highly dependent on flows of influence and power, and subject to the beliefs and values of the academic culture” is made by Dill (2000) (p. 106). Even early researchers recognized that leadership use of symbols and rituals (social events) is important in defining the cultural atmosphere of an organization ((Kroeber, 1958). Thus, leadership actions become inexorably intertwined with the determinations of culture in an organization.

While there is a formidable volume of literature that breaks down the work of leadership into various tasks and duties, Charns and Schaefer (1983) submits that all duties distill down to one simple, yet profoundly meaningful, job: decision-making to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Schein (2004) argues that

the creation and management of culture is the only thing of real importance that leaders do and that leadership and culture are “two sides of the same coin” (p. 1). Leaders also serve as symbols for representing causation of social events (Pfeffer, 1977). In this way, all decision-making of leadership, whether it is directed toward an identifiable cultural event like staging an awards presentation or deciding to revamp the accounts receivable process, entails some kind of cultural affirming, neglecting, or change element.

However, decision-making in a loosely coupled organization like a college or university cannot be easily compared to a business organization for decision-making in a college is more participative (Tierney, 1988). This difference plays out in a number of administrative arenas like strategic planning, leadership style, and change management. Describing how organizational culture affects these administrative tasks is necessary to understand the far-reaching impact of higher educational culture on the operation of the institution.

Swenk (1999) describes the influence of culture on the strategic planning processes of a university. While strategic planning is described as a managerial process characterized by rational decision-making theory, the loosely coupled decision-making in the university between faculty subculture and administration subculture (shared governance) often thwarts this rationality. Swenk concludes that the failure of both faculty and administration to recognize the cultural roles assigned to each prevents meaningful adaptation of the institution to the environmental change it faces.

Organizational culture also plays a prominent role in other administrative and managerial processes in colleges and universities. In a review of management theories and their application to leadership styles and decision-making in higher education

organizations, Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum describes perspectives on the management theories of (1) power and influence, (2) social power, (3) transactional, (4) transformational, (5) behavioral, (6) contingency, (7) cultural and symbolic, and (8) cognitive theories to characterize leadership adaptations to various management tasks and duties. While all of these theories have their pros and cons, the cultural and symbolic theory is “especially useful for understanding the internal dynamics of institutions in financial crisis, particularly in differentiating the strategies leaders use to cope with financial stress and to communicate with constituents” (p. 222). This salient comment should be kept in mind because financial stress is an area of keen interest to all in higher education leadership today and may be a stated rationale for organizational changes like mergers.

In complement to Bensimon, et al. (1989) is the conclusion of Kezar and Eckel (2002) who find that the success of change strategy is closely linked to the cultural coherence of that strategy. Kezar and Eckel suggest that leaders become a form of “cultural outsider” (p. 457) in order to gain the perspective of the institution’s culture in its entirety and balance the “insider” perspective they already have. This approach necessitates that a leader network with outside institutions, use external consultants, and publicly explore assumptions by attending and presenting at conferences.

Taken as a whole, these investigators, both those who center on culture in higher education and those more general organizational culture theorists paint a picture. This picture explains the meaning and ramifications of culture in a manner consistent in both higher education institutions and the wider commercial set of organizations. However, there are those who argue that there are fundamental differences, which by inference also

mean a difference of cultures, between higher education and other conventional business entities.

Among those theorists who argue that there are significant distinguishing operating and cultural characteristics between the academy and other business entities are Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley (1977). These characteristics include goal ambiguity due to a multi-faceted mission, services dedicated to development of a client who expects input into the decision-making processes of the organization, and a problematic technology that resists segmentation and standardization. Baldrige, et al. suggests the manner used to integrate these disparate parts is to employ highly trained and skilled professionals who have the expertise and autonomy to deal with these ambiguities. This broad autonomy, as compared to employees in conventional businesses, leads to a kind of organized anarchy. The academic organizational response to these professional autonomy demands is to organize in a manner that yields an operation Weick (1976) describes as a loosely coupled system. This type of organization where decision-making is diffused, goals are multiple, and actions generally derive from consensus differs markedly from those seen in the business sector where unity of purpose, hierarchical structure, and streamlined decision-making are perceived as the best methods to achieve organizational goals. If the above characteristics of higher education organizations are true, then it lends support to the contention that profound organizational events, like mergers in colleges and universities, are better examined through the cultural route as opposed to the more business sector-like structural, human resource, or political framework of Bolman and Deal (1997). The culture perspective takes these concrete and rational aspects of organizations such as hierarchies, rules, and routines, and describes them as social

constructions that are indispensable for people to understanding of how the organization functions on a daily basis (Morgan, 1997).

Simpson (2002) offers that in the higher education sector emphasis is placed on effectiveness. This viewpoint results in an organization that values scholarship as its product, rather than profit. Simpson identifies the major difference in higher education and business as the way the two are governed; business has its “top down” structure and higher education has its professional governance. In looking at the unique nature of higher education in our economy, Simpson differentiates it from corporate America in the following ways: (1) customer service is not the end-all in higher education, (2) higher education favors effectiveness over efficiency, and (3) higher education shares governance. Simpson’s same argument is made by Brock and Harvey (1993) in their comparison of higher education to corporate business. Tierney (1993) goes so far as to assert that colleges and universities are not businesses and should not be expected to act like them. Brock and Harvey (1993) note that merger is not usually a viable option for higher education due to the relative powerlessness of its CEO compared with a business CEO and because of higher education’s multiple and often conflicting goals.

In contrast to those who view higher education as distinctly different from commercial business, there has been a slow, but inexorable move toward considering the university as a business in the commercial sense and, as such, subject to the same market forces that govern business enterprises where mergers are more commonly seen. In an oblique gesture toward this new orientation, Levine (2001) suggests that colleges and universities need to respond quickly and creatively to new financial constraints, the calls for accountability, and the social forces being applied today. The terms *quickly and*

creatively hardly reflect the picture of an organization described as an organized anarchy or as a loosely coupled system, as originally penned by Baldrige and Weick in the mid 1970s. The concept of the academy as a business, together with the application of business principles or strategies to its operation, is becoming more accepted (Brock, 1993; Lamal, 2001; O'Neil, 1999).

Perhaps the reason that treating the university as a business is gaining acceptance has to do with the increasingly hostile financial and accountability environment present today. From the operational side, the pressures to produce learning that is utilitarian or required by an information age economy are dramatically increasing, together with greater demand for services by larger numbers of students (Duderstadt, 1999). Yet, the societal and governmental resources allocated to perform this greater work are decreasing (Conklin, 2002; Duderstadt, 2003). Hence, the efficiency and productivity conventionally demanded of commercial businesses is being translated to higher education, together with the expectation of no loss in effectiveness. Higher education seems to have arrived at the doorstep of *do more with less*. For the industry of higher education, and presumably its culture, it appears that the romantic and modernist-derived explanations of organizational construction, adaptation, and language are becoming seen as vestiges in a postmodernist world (Gergen, 1993).

The Similarities Between Higher Education and Health Care

If similar industries are subjected to similar external pressures then they should both react in a similar manner. There are more than passing similarities between the position held by higher education in society and that held by hospitals. Hospitals have been called the *modern cathedrals* of our civic life (Hurley, 1993). A similar relationship

could be argued for other manifestations of civic life like museums, orchestras, or theatres. Like the cathedrals of medieval times, hospitals are objects of civic pride and the community contributes in ways that are not common with mercantile or manufacturing organizations. For example, how many people volunteer at Wal-Mart like they do for a hospital?

I propose that colleges and universities hold a similar position, that colleges and universities are essentially *cathedrals of learning* that hold special significance for our communities and for society in general. In addition, because of this societal similarity, I contend that health care and higher education resemble each other in more operational terms as well. One demonstration of this societal significance is that governments allow tax exemptions for most hospitals and colleges. Hospitals and colleges certainly have their differences, but these differences are more of application than of fundamentals (Goedegebuure, 1992).

On a more individual level, members of the community express support for hospitals primarily through volunteerism and, secondarily, through monetary contributions. For a college this appears reversed where monetary support from alumni and patrons forms the major expression of support while volunteerism seems secondary. The higher education institution performs a *quid pro quo* by incorporating community service into its mission. It is this personally identifiable extension into the hearts, minds, and wallets of community members that may be one of the reasons why merger activity is lower for colleges and universities. The community identifies with the institution and for that institution to essentially disappear in a singular sense to become something else with another institution, upsets the community's vision of its identity. The special

consideration given by the community for both hospitals and colleges can manifest itself in community attempts to influence the decision whether each should merge with its respective counterparts or not. Such influence is usually seriously considered. However, the decision is ultimately made by either the hospital or college board of governance in what they feel is in the best interest of the organization.

The health care industry forms a substantial segment of the economy, approximately 13 percent of the gross domestic product (Sultz, 2004). Health care has more than casual similarities to higher education, yet the response of health care organizations to the pressures of the marketplace occur in much the same manner as the archetypical American corporation (Bazzoli, LoSasso, Arnould, and Shalowitz, 2002). However, a casual comparison of these two industries is made by Goedegebuure (1992) where he identifies that both have professional bureaucracies, as described by Mintzberg (1979), both have professional authority combined with a separate administration, both deal with the handling of knowledge, and both have a loosely coupled structure with structural differentiation along the lines of professional disciplines. If one accepts that these similarities hold prima facie validity, and many in both sectors do, then it is reasonable to suppose that the economic forces exerted on health care, together with the responses it took might form a template for higher education responses in similar circumstances.

Mergers in Health Care

Health care has experienced a wave of hospital mergers during the 1990's and early years of this century. Hospital and health care merger activity has significantly increased in the 1990's. In the period of 1983 – 1988 a total of 74 mergers occurred in the

hospital sector while in the period 1989 – 1996 that number was 174 Bazzoli, LaSasso, Arnould, and Shalowitz (2002).

Many of the same factors that drive mergers in business also motivate hospital mergers. According to Bazzoli et al. (2002) reasons given for mergers in business and hospitals were to strengthen financial position, achieve operating efficiencies, and consolidate services. Wilke and Choi (1988) found essentially the same motivations for hospital mergers.

The advent of managed care also produced circumstances that promote mergers in health care organizations, primarily by accelerating the price competitive comparisons between hospitals and other health care providers (Brown, 1996). These competitive pressures result in both horizontally and vertically integrated mergers, particularly in long term care (Gordon, 1998). (Morrisey, 2001) argues that price competition is a factor motivating hospital mergers and goes on to find that, as in other businesses, mergers in health care generally do not significantly reduce prices to customers. This finding of health care price increases following not-for-profit hospital mergers was also confirmed by (Vita, 2001). As opposed to customer prices, it is not known if hospital mergers succeed in reducing organizational costs. Reduction in costs is one of the driving motivations for hospital mergers and, presumably, it would also be so in higher education mergers.

Unfortunately, the development of organizational culture in hospital mergers is also an under-studied area of investigation. What small mention there is in the health care literature shows some consistency in stating the under-appreciated nature of culture to the success of, process of, or failure of hospital mergers. Missteps in managing culture or

failure to take the organizations' cultures into account when undergoing large amounts of change are usually realized in hindsight (Bruhn, 2001; Shield, 2002; Vestal, 1997; Waldman, 2003).

The resemblance of health care to higher education allows some general circumstances surrounding mergers in the former to be prospectively attributed to the latter. The first is that mergers in health care are driven by either (1) one partner being financially disadvantaged versus the other(s), (2) the desire for economies of scale that can accrue to a larger, merged organization, (3) enlarging the diversity of services offered by each organization through combining, and (4) reducing expensive start-up expenses for new services. However, the role of organizational culture in health care mergers is under-developed in the literature.

Financial and Societal Changes Faced by Higher Education

Even though higher education and health care seem to resemble each other as industries, are the environmental stresses facing the two similar? Health care faces rising costs, decreasing governmental payments (Medicare and Medicaid), questioning of the quality of its outcomes, and decreasing the public's trust for it to do the right thing (Sultz and Young, 2004). Are similar pressures facing higher education?

The major trends of societal change affecting higher education as identified by Sporn (1999) include the development of an information economy, diminished state support, increased demand for higher education, expansion of learning technologies, and economic globalization. The increased demand for higher education is particularly significant. (Duderstadt, 2003) calls this a "massification" of higher education's population. (Duderstadt, 1999) adds an additional societal influence, market force, which

runs counter to the traditional public perception of higher education in this country. By market forces, Duderstadt means the competitive actions that demand nimble response to the needs of constituents in a manner that provides high value within a price that constituents can sustain. It is a system capable of rewarding those who can rapidly respond to a change and punishing those who cannot.

The effect of these societal and global economic changes on higher education is to produce an operating environment where turbulence, decreasing resources, competitiveness, rising costs, unpredictability, and demands for higher quality (value) have formed a post-industrial chaos (Cameron, 1992). Indeed, the decrease in state monetary resources devoted to public higher education cannot be seen as something that will correct itself when the current economic downturn corrects itself. The previous ebbs and flows of state support, corresponding to economic good and bad times, is not realistically expected to occur (Duderstadt, 2003).

The societal and financial situation in which higher education currently finds itself can be characterized as one encompassing increasing demands for performance with a decrease in the resources conventionally thought necessary to achieve that performance. Higher education's product quality is being called into question and the cost effectiveness of its efforts is not perceived by society to be sustainable. The situation is strongly reminiscent of that facing the health care industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Sultz and Young, 2004). The result of those pressures on health care was the creation of managed care, which spun-off hospital mergers as a partial response to economic pressures. If the suggestion that the resemblance between higher education and health care is plausible, meaning that more mergers in higher education will occur in the

future, the question to ask is, “will organizational culture in higher education mergers be under-emphasized and under-investigated as it has been in health care?” An examination of the literature pertaining to higher education mergers, both in the United States and internationally, suggests it will be.

Institutional Culture and Higher Education Mergers: The United States

In contrast to the relatively frequent use of merger in business and health care, higher education mergers, at least in the United States, have not been commonly used as an organizational tool. However, higher education is dealing with the same scenario of rising costs, an over-built infrastructure relative to the advent of distance learning technologies, increasing prices for its services, decreasing affordability to its customers, decreasing government funding, and questions about the quality of its services. What follows in the next two sections is an examination of the extant literature covering mergers of higher education institutions in this country and how higher education merger activity appears internationally, where differences in the state-to-institution governance have led to greater levels of government mandated mergers. Emphasis is placed on those studies that address culture in higher education mergers and the perceptions of people involved in such ventures.

(Cannon, 1983) argues that the strong culture of higher education organizations is a reason they are reluctant to surrender one or both charters and to form a new entity that has one board, one faculty, one administration, and one organizational structure. She also asserts that the language used in college or university mergers (consolidation, affiliation, absorption, acquisition) implies that stakeholders view the event from different perspectives. Merger is mentioned as a viable option, but not exactly promoted, to college

board members in financially troubled institutions (O'Neill, 1980). Millett (1976) attributes the primary cause of merger in colleges and universities to financial stress. In his case study of 10 mergers in higher education, organizational culture is not addressed.

Martin and Samels (1994) confirm that merger is infrequently done due to the strong tradition of institutional autonomy. They trace organizational responses to the demands of growth and change in higher education to (1) build larger, more complex individual institutions, (2) systems of linked institutions being developed in the public sector, and (3) the development of consortia or alliances, and mergers. Martin and Samels are comprehensive and meticulous in their coverage of the administrative, financial, legal, leadership, governance, physical plant, and faculty issues attendant to higher education mergers. They are the first researchers to address the problems of alumni and institutional foundations in mergers. However, the only attention to institutional culture is to the subculture of students (Martin and Samels, 1994). There is no discussion of the larger organizational culture, or the psychological or behavioral issues associated with merger. The subject of human resources management comprises two pages. Although Martin and Samels offered a detailed business oriented approach to mergers in higher education, it is of limited use in examining how organizational culture emerges to play a role in mergers. It should be noted that the failure to see a rise in merger activity in the late 1990s prompted Martin and Samels (2002) to say they were wrong about merger activity increasing and that they now favor alliances between institutions, rather than merger.

There is some indication that colleges and universities see the value of merger as an answer to weakness in their financial situation (Van Der Werf, 2001);(Van Der Werf,

2002). However, these *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles make no mention of the organizational culture implications of mergers. The most interesting development in the higher education merger arena is coming from the actions or intentions of state legislatures and state education agencies that fund public higher education by consolidation of certain public colleges and universities like the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, in order to reduce duplicative programs (Simsek, 2000); (Wallace, 1998). The same type of government initiative toward merger is seen in New Jersey with the New Jersey Institute of Technology, the University of Medicine and Dentistry, and Rutgers University (Margulies, 2002), although that merger plan was called off in 2003 because of the high estimated costs of \$1.25 billion over 10 years and by the vociferous opposition posed by the institutions involved (Newman, 2003). Another example is the merger talks started due to state government intervention between Northwest Missouri State University and the University of Missouri system (Arnone, 2003). None of these references addressed issues relating to development of organizational culture and the mergers.

In one of the very few investigations of higher education mergers in the United States that addresses some aspect of culture change, (Misite, 1994) examines the merger of Host College and Charles College. Misite looks at the merger process itself, from an administrative and managerial perspective, and also examined the human dynamics issues that evolved during those merger processes. Human dynamics issues are subdivided along the domains of climate, culture, morale, and motivation. Misite finds that while the enrollment and financial aspects of the merger go reasonably well, the human dynamics aspects, particularly the morale domain, are far less successful. Misite

calls for leaders contemplating a merger to pay more attention to the human dynamics elements of the enterprise. This finding is consistent with the results of studies of post-merger culture in health care organizations.

Parenthetically, one of the more interesting facets of Misite's (1994) methodology was the use of interviewees drawing how each person viewed the merger. Given the difficulties and various interpretations that individuals can have in verbally addressing the often-abstract features of organizational culture, drawings provide a refreshing and insightful mechanism for the investigator to gain additional information about participants' feelings, perceptions of events, relationships, and an overall flavor for their stories that might otherwise be missed. Together with the more conventional investigative tools of rich descriptions taken from in-depth interviews and examination of pertinent organizational documents, the use of drawings offers a keyhole through which previously unattainable information can be perceived. This research design feature will be further addressed in the methods chapter.

Institutional Culture and Higher Education Mergers: International

It is on the international stage where the greatest merger activity is occurring in higher education, in terms of the number of institutions actually undergoing merger, the scholarly investigations into the business-related mechanisms of merger, and also the effects of institutional culture on those mergers. Examples of this are seen in The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which is encouraging schools with financial difficulties to merge (Anonymous, 2001). There are currently two mergers under way in England, one between the University of Manchester and Umist (Anonymous, 2002a) and the other between the University College London and Imperial

College (Anonymous, 2002b). Direct government pressure for higher education institutions to merge is seen in Norway (Kyvik, 2002), South Africa (Cherry, 1997), Hungary (Woodward, 1997), and Australia (Barcan, 1997).

International higher education also is the source of more robust scholarly investigations into the phenomenon of institutional mergers. Yet, the inclusion of organizational culture as an influence in the merger process is only alluded to in many of these studies. Fewer still focus on culture and examine the phenomena as a central issue to their research. However, reviewing the research where culture is treated in more tangential ways does yield useful information that can be appreciated when examining the more pertinent studies.

Goedegebuure (1992) constructs an exploration of several college and university mergers in Australia and the Netherlands from the resource dependency perspective. Despite being an innovative and well-grounded investigation into the business elements of mergers in higher education, Goedegebuure (1992) did not discuss organizational culture as a factor in the mergers. There is tangential reference to culture in his discussion of why a large number of mergers, about 50 percent overall between the corporate and public sectors, do not succeed. Goedegebuure states, “almost without exception, the large number of case studies undertaken with respect to public sector mergers indicates that they are intimately associated with problems, stress, and anxieties at both the inter-institutional level, the basic unit, and the individual level” (p. 223). It is reasonable to conclude that these problems are influenced in some way by the differing cultures of the institutions.

Mahony (1994) looks at the interactions between government policy makers and institutions of higher education in Australia during a reorganization of their system in the late 1980s and early 1990s that resulted in several mergers. Mahony does not address the effects of institutional culture in the resulting mergers or in the institution to government communication that takes place.

Broadbent (1997) details the merger of four Catholic higher education institutions in Australia into the Australian Catholic University in 1991. In describing faculty perceptions about the merger, it appears that despite some work routine disruptions, most faculty either welcomed the merger or were resigned to its inevitability. One can reasonably infer that the lack of cultural conflict among faculty might be due to the relatively homogenous nature of the basic cultural assumptions (Catholic doctrine) that reside in these similar colleges.

In discussing the creation of Charles Sturt University in Australia, Hatton (2002) relates a case study describing the various economic, political, and leadership characteristics associated with the merger. Certain staff and faculty of the technical schools that formed Charles Sturt University indicated they were not hired with a “university” type of position in mind. While this caused some problems, the overall impression was that the more qualified faculty and staff were actually liberated by their new affiliation with a more research-oriented university. One person remarked that it was a mistake to keep anything like school names and coats of arms, which apparently were retained by some of the technical college facilities. This speaks to the power of symbols that can emerge in an organization’s culture.

In yet another case study of mergers in Australian higher education, Curri (2002) looks at the unification of the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) into the Unified National System (UNS). Although culture was not a focus of this case study, Curri asserts the greater the age of the institution the more difficult it is to change its culture. This corresponds to Schein's observation (2004). It is interesting that Curri found that loose federations among institutions tend to become more bureaucratic and less efficient. That seems to contradict the observations made by Martin and Samels (2002) that alliance or other type of inter-institutional cooperation, short of merger, is now the preferred method of financially dealing with a turbulent and hostile environment.

Shifting the investigatory scene to higher education mergers in South Africa, Jansen (2003) looks at the curriculum integration implications that resulted when three pairs of institutions are brought together. While the focus of the study is clearly on curriculum issues, many of the interviewees' excerpted comments speak to the frustration, confusion, and conflicts arising in the faculty and student subcultures. As such, Jansen provides anecdotal evidence of culture strains because of mergers.

Hay and Fourie (2002) looked at staff perceptions of a possible merger with another institution in the face of decreasing funding and increasing competition. Hay and Fourie reported that staff was generally accepting of factors that could lead to mergers and would accept the necessity of merging so long as other alternatives are thoroughly explored. Factors that promoted acceptance of a merger option were clear statements of mission and goals, leadership and commitment at the highest levels, clear lines of communication, and quality assurance mechanisms in place for measuring success. Hay and Fourie's study does not identify the potential merger partner to participants in their

survey. As inferred from Broadbent (1997) and Hatton (2002), knowing who the merger partner is can influence organizational members to be more or less accepting of the merger action.

Kyvik (2002) studied the 1994 Norwegian merger of 98 vocationally oriented colleges into what became 26 new state colleges. The focus of this investigation was not on organizational culture, but the government motivations, government policy, institutional financial conditions, academic work, and administrative effect of the mergers. Kyvik mentions institutional culture as an important factor to keep in mind when proposing and undertaking a merger operation. An oblique glimpse of culture's development in the merger can be seen in comments that the "weakly developed social and professional networks appear to be a major obstacle to the development of academic co-operation across disciplinary boundaries" (p. 66).

Eastman and Lang (2001) perform an extensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding the merger of the Technical University of Nova Scotia with Dalhousie University and the merger of the University of Toronto with the Ontario Institute for Studies of Education. Although the role institutional culture plays is not the focus of these two case studies, Eastman and Lang (2001) offer many suggestions in managing the human dimension of a higher education merger which speaks to culture:

1. Given the collective power and the individual autonomy enjoyed by faculty members, and the extent to which institutional success depends on their performance and achievement, it is especially important to attend to the human side of higher education mergers.

2. Although the emergence of 'stories' cannot be controlled, those involved in negotiating and managing mergers should consider how potential decisions and actions may be perceived and to what stories about the new organization they may give rise.
3. Changes that give people additional status or prestige are likely to be accepted much more readily than changes that deprive them of it.
4. It is important that those people appointed to leadership roles in the negotiation and transition processes enjoy the trust of administrators, faculty members, staff, and students at their institution.
5. Distrust works against effective communication and, hence, collaboration.
6. Managers should recognize that mergers can be difficult for faculty and staff whose objective situations appear relatively unchanged, as well as for those who experience job loss or change or other dislocations. They should be alert for signs of psychological damage and offer assistance to the afflicted.
7. When enlisting individuals in building the new unit or institution, transition managers should bear in mind that individuals who were not at the center of the old order may have the most enthusiasm for the task.
8. To the extent that integration, rather than co-existence, is sought, design administrative structures and organize processes whereby people choose or are assigned to departments, in such a way as to increase the likelihood of day-to-day interaction between members of the groups that are merging.

9. Think through how institutional relationships will change as a result of a merger; identify constituencies with which you need to communicate and put in place vehicles and resources that will enable you to do so in a timely fashion.
10. Formal communication should come from institutional leaders and should be coupled with the dissemination of information through personal communication up and down the organizational chart.
11. Begin communicating immediately and keep communicating often.

While Eastman and Lang's (2001) suggestions relate to the characteristics of trust, stories, communication, and collaboration within an organization. These are the same terms often used in describing aspects of organizational culture.

In one of three studies directly dealing with the subject of culture change in higher education mergers, Harmon (2002) looks at Australian institutional mergers that occurred between 1987 and 1991. She relates that, "when embedded cultures of un-complimentary institutions collide, they become a potent force that can retard or prevent organizational change" (p. 110).

In the second investigation into the effects of culture on mergers, Harmon and Harmon (2003) more specifically comment on the effects of institutional culture on mergers in higher education. Harmon and Harmon reiterate that the development of culture in higher education is not well understood, secondary to the small numbers of investigations into the subject. They suggest that, "Mergers appear to work better where there exists greater possibility of integration and articulation between the goals and visions of the institutions in question that is horizontal mergers between institutions whose missions and cultures are complimentary" (p. 38). Harmon and Harmon also

express the high degree of difficulty posed by merging even complimentary cultures and that the effects of mismanaging even similar cultures can be devastating to the morale of the people involved.

The third study examines institution culture effects on mergers in Norwegian higher education (Norgard and Skodvin, 2002). This research adds the dimension of geography to a higher education merger. In the same series of mergers studied by Kyvik (2002), Norgard and Skodvin analyze the cultural interaction of the participating institutions from the perspective of network theory. Network theory posits that networks are composed of nodes connected by ties. The three types of networks are: (1) Infrastructural – the physical ties that constitute the geographic space of the organization; (2) Organizational – ties among individuals, groups, and workplaces in production systems; and (3) Social – the ties that transmit ideas, impulses, and influence to a network of people known to each other, creating an informal connection. Norgard and Skodvin also use the concept of structural holes, places where the connections between participants in a network are missing. This is more likely to occur in loosely coupled organizations like colleges and universities that have a tradition of intra-institutional autonomy populated by disciplines and faculty that often do not interact meaningfully outside those disciplines. Norgard and Skodvin propose that structural holes will appear in mergers when there are weak organizational and academic ties, weak infra-institutional links, and lack of social connections between different people in the organization due to geographic distance.

Norgard and Skodvin's (2002) conclusions are that in the Norwegian institutional mergers, weakly developed social networks prove to be the greatest obstacle in the

creation of cooperation across disciplinary boundaries. Social networks are best created when there is a common culture. Two merged cultures where the parts separately vie for attention, resources, and recognition makes the social network much more difficult to create in merged institutions. Without the support of the social network, the work of the organizational network is hindered. Another constraining factor on the development of the social networks is the geographic distance between most institutions, usually of 20 kilometers or more. Fewer opportunities to meet mean that personal relationships necessary for the social network to form take longer to mature or never take place at all.

The relatively small volume of literature related to mergers in higher education focuses on the operational, managerial, governance, and legal issues that such undertakings involves. An even smaller fraction of the literature deals with the development of organizational culture in merging colleges or universities. The most salient literature on mergers originates internationally. Since the culture of any organization is derived, in part, from the culture of the society in which it resides (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), a literal transfer of findings discovered internationally to American higher education should be viewed with caution. Additional research on the interactions between organizational culture and higher education mergers in the United States is necessary before robust comparisons to international events can be made.

The Under-appreciation of Mergers in Higher Education

As much as the societal climate for higher education is changing, there are many leaders within colleges and universities who offer informed punditry as to what responses and directions the industry should take in order to cope with an increasingly hostile and turbulent future. Most of these proposals or suggestions do not emphasize institutional

merger as an organizational coping mechanism (Alfred, 2000; Blustain, 1999; Conklin, 2002; Duderstadt, 1999; Immerwahr, 2002; Levine, 2001). Duderstadt (1999) states, “we could expect to see a significant reorganization of higher education, complete with mergers, acquisitions, new competitors, and new products and services” (p. 39). And Levine (2001) makes a rather oblique reference that merger activity may be in the offing when speaking of a future reduction in the number of physical campuses. He states, “States are likely to begin asking why we need all of this physical plant. California, for example, might ask why any state would need 9 public research universities. Or New York might wonder if a state really needs 64 separate state universities” (p. 263). Although closing is as sound an interpretation of this quote as merger would be.

One possible reason why research on the development of culture in college or university mergers does not receive more attention is that there are simply not a lot of mergers occurring. There are prominent exceptions such as the mergers of Carnegie Tech and the Mellon Institute to form Carnegie Mellon University, and of Western Reserve University and the Case Institute to create Case Western Reserve University. Somewhat less prominent is the merger of Tift College with Mercer University and the Delaware Law School and Boston State College with the University of Massachusetts, Boston (Martin and Samels, 1994). While this is not intended to be a comprehensive listing, still, considering the number of colleges and universities in the United States, the amount of merger activity is, and has been, relatively small.

The reasons for the lack of merger activity in an industry beset with institutional challenges are unclear. In the late 1990s higher education leaders seemed to recognize that mergers would become a more common method of dealing with financial and growth

problems. So much was the interest that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* devoted a cover story to mergers on March 23, 2001 (Van Der Werf, 2001). However, the “mania” appears to have worn off rather rapidly. To date, the number of mergers has not risen appreciably, prompting (Martin and Samels, 2002) to state that they were wrong about the anticipated increase in higher education merger activity and that they now prefer institutional alliances.

Among the reasons Martin and Samels (2002) now favor alliances over mergers is that alliances preserve the institutional mission, enrich fundamental objectives, maintain the academic governance system, create new income streams, and cut costs. However, the examples Martin and Samels use to illustrate these points are rather narrow. For instance, under the headings of creating new income streams and enriching fundamental objectives, the examples offered only deal with alliances between higher education institutions and for-profit corporations, not between two or more higher education organizations. Their heading of cutting costs uses the example of money saved by not having to deal with the complex legal proceedings associated with the merger of endowments and institutional scholarships. What is missing from their analysis is what could be saved in a merged organization by having only one office of admissions, finance, human resources, and marketing where previously there was two of each, thus achieving economies of scale. Another factor not alluded to by Martin and Samels is the cost savings realized when two institutions merge in order to diversify and broaden program offerings, rather than each incurring the start-up costs of separate and competing programs.

There is empirical evidence that it is more common for colleges and universities to close rather than seek merger as a strategy to overcome financial adversity (Williams, 2001). This paradigm for closure seems quite strong (Ehrenberg, 2000) and is supported by the earlier findings of Fadil and Thrift (1978) that among independent colleges and universities between 1970 and 1978 there were 64 new organizations founded, 129 closed, and only 42 merged. Of those institutions that closed, it is not known whether they considered merger and rejected it or simply failed to recognize merger as an option at all.

I propose that there are three factors that have held higher education mergers to a low number thus far. One is that finances are not sufficiently exigent for many colleges and universities to consider merger a viable option. Most colleges and universities are embarking on cost cutting and other efficiency measures under the present models of operation, essentially cutting the “fat” out of the system. That may soon change, as the pressures of the competitive, revenue-scarce environment become more severe or prolonged, forcing not just the trimming of fat but also the cutting of bone and muscle.

The second factor limiting mergers is the unique relationship a college or university has with its community. As I previously proposed, a university is a *cathedral of learning* and is the recipient of civic pride and resources from the community in the same manner as the medieval citizens related to their religious cathedrals. The community would perceive its investment in the university to be in jeopardy in the event of a merger. Moreover, universities have large numbers of alumni who identify with their institution in a way that only happens when an organization contributes significantly to the growth and maturation of young adults.

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The third factor limiting merger activity is the culture of higher education organizations that emphasizes independence, autonomy, and individuality. I suggest that the interplay between still being able to trim operations and institutional autonomy is such that the resulting culture dampens or thwarts recognizing the advantages of merger. For colleges or universities that are financially fragile, sometimes that recognition comes too late, resulting in more institutional closures than mergers (Williams, 2001).

The resistance of higher education to merger as a remedy for the financial difficulties resulting from a turbulent competitive environment and diminishing private/public resources can be appreciated as resulting from: (1) the current ability to employ revenue generating or cost-cutting mechanisms short of merger; (2) the insular culture of higher education itself; and (3) the resistance to identity loss of the institution by the community and the alumni. The perception in the 1990s was that more mergers between higher education institutions were imminent (Martin and Samels, 1994). When increased merger activity did not happen, Martin and Samels (2002) admitted they were wrong. I assert that they were not wrong, but premature. The greatest motivation for merger is an organization's financial exigency (Millett, 1976). As long as colleges and universities perceive that they can survive solely by cutting costs and increasing tuition in the face of declining public and private funding sources, then mergers will remain an infrequent option. However, if the traditional funding sources continue to decline, a certain tipping point will inevitably be reached where tuition increase is not possible and cost cutting will no longer suffice. Mergers between higher education organizations will then be more often considered and enacted, despite the cultural resistance within the institution or the community. If funding resources continue to decline and costs continue

to increase as they have in the past five years, I believe that tipping point is palpably imminent.

Review of the Literature: Summary

The study examines the influence of organizational culture in a merged higher education institution. Since there is currently little higher education merger activity in the United States, it was necessary to examine the subject of culture in organizations, culture in higher education organizations in the United States, merger in business and health care (as an analogy to higher education), and then the literature on mergers in higher education, particularly international higher education, in order to narrow the research focus.

The literature on organizational culture orients the reader to the importance of culture in the events, processes, and life of any coherent group of people engaged in collective actions. Schein (2004) relates that the real job of any leader is to define, change, and focus the culture of his or her organization. Tangential support for this view is made by Morgan (1997), who suggests that leaders are central in deciding which lens is used for interpretation of organizational actions, and therefore, are instrumental in shaping the reality and culture of the organization.

Schein (2004) also provides a powerful, yet readily understandable process through which artifacts become espoused values leading to basic assumptions, and creating the culture of an organization. In spite of all the managerial theories, planning mechanisms, calculations, and procedures that form a fine patina overlaying organizational rationality, it is the culture of the organization that ultimately dictates which directions are taken and the managerial technologies used to reach them. As such,

organizational culture becomes the light that shines on all aspects of the institution in a manner that cannot be replicated by examination of finance, managerial style, governance, strategic planning, quality assurance, or policymaking alone. Therefore, using culture as a means to focus investigation and analysis is justified as the most comprehensive approach to explore the pervasive and far-reaching implications of an organizational merger.

The frequency of mergers in American higher education is low and they are not studied often. When merger is studied in higher education, research often focuses on particular administrative, managerial, governance, curricular, or financial aspects. Even when a more comprehensive treatment is made, the influence of organizational culture is under-represented or commented on in an informal manner. That serves as additional justification for this study investigates the influence of organizational culture in higher education mergers.

There is greater attention paid to mergers occurring in other countries and, therefore, a greater and more systematic depth of investigation, particularly in the realm of institutional culture. Even here there is a paucity of studies that utilize a robust research methodology. In addition, international evidence for higher education organizations culture impact when merging with another institution might be viewed differently through American culture. The general culture of American higher education has developed within the larger American national culture, which then makes comparisons to mergers of colleges and universities in other countries inexact.

The last, and most compelling justification for this study is the sparse attention given to the development of organizational culture with a more ethnographical or

anthropological approach that explores the experiences, representations, and narrative stories of those involved. This is notably missing from our understanding of higher education administrative practices as they relate to institutional mergers. Examinations of how higher education academic and operational administrators make sense out of the profound cultural upheavals attendant to institutional merger will provide insights for organizational leadership embarking on an endeavor like institutional merger or other institutional change that carries the likelihood of extreme organizational culture rearrangement.

Conceptual Framework

It is helpful, at this point, to reiterate Schein's (2004) definition of a group culture as, "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to new problems" (p. 12). The conceptual framework for this study derives from Schein's (2004) levels of culture that are subordinate to this definition. These levels include: (1) artifacts – the visible organizational structures, symbols, and processes; (2) espoused values – the strategies, goals, philosophies, and other espoused justifications for an organization's actions; and (3) basic underlying assumptions – those unconscious, often taken-for-granted beliefs, thoughts, and feelings that become the source of values and actions. As such, a snapshot description of these cultural components does not provide sufficient information to construct the rich mosaic of interactions between them. A more detailed explanation is necessary.

Cultural artifacts are readily observable, but it is difficult to assign deeper meaning to them simply through observation alone. These artifacts include the vocabulary used by members, the technology used, the observable behavioral routines, the appropriate dress, the myths and stories told, and the rituals enacted. The difficulty lies in the variable meaning that can be given to visible symbols, processes, and structures. Schein (2004) states, “one can only test one’s insight into what something might mean if one has also experienced the culture from the level of its values and basic assumptions” (p. 18). An illustration of this is the observable image of the blue suit, white shirt, and conservative tie worn by executives of IBM in the 1950s and 60s. Alone, this observation conveys little meaning, but with additional insight into the formalized, conformist business atmosphere of the company, the dress becomes emblematic of the conservative nature of the company’s values at the time.

Schein (2004) cautions that one should not attempt to infer deeper aspects of espoused values or basic assumptions using artifacts alone. This limitation is based on the realization that the researcher will interpret artifacts on the basis of his or her feelings and experiences, which may not be a valid interpretation for the members of the organization. Thus, in order for the observations to gain validity the observer must either already be a member of the group, spend a sufficient amount of time with the group in order to more correctly interpret the artifacts, and/or conduct further investigation into the espoused values and basic assumptions represented by the cultural artifacts. Schein relates that researchers are likely to note artifacts as the observable manifestations of culture, but like the visible portion of an iceberg, artifacts alone do not give much information as to the shape and texture to the majority of the culture remaining under the surface.

Espoused values begin their formation process when an organizational group is faced with a new or unique problem or issue. Schein (2004) reveals that the first person to suggest a solution or course of action to the new situation does so based on his or her own idea of what is correct. If this person's approach prevails in the group, he or she is considered to have taken a leadership role with regard to the new situation. However, the group does not yet share the presumption of correctness with the leader until the course of action implemented deals successfully with the problem. It is the sharing of the group in the success of the action taken that begins the creation of a shared value or belief.

Schein (2004) calls this evolution of the implemented action and the group's perceived success of the action into a shared value a "cognitive transformation" (p. 19). Not all successful actions undergo the transformation. The factors influencing this cognitive transformation process include whether the results of the action taken are subject to either physical or social validation. Physical validation can be equated with some form of empirical quantification such as enrollment increases, attainment of accreditation, or increase in graduation rates. Social validation is characterized by Schein as "where the test of whether they [the actions] work or not is how comfortable and anxiety free members are when they abide by them" (p.20). Another factor is whether the actions work reliably in similar situations. Those that are inconsistent in being successful with what the group considers to be similar problems or situations will not become a shared value. The group's ability to identify accurately the similarities between the problems or situations is an obvious limitation here. A third factor is that the action must continue to work reliably over time. Only those actions that are successful, according to

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the factors noted above, will be firmly rooted as espoused values and will begin the last stage in the transformation process to a basic assumption.

Basic assumptions are formed from those espoused values that are subject either to physical or social validation, work reliably in similar situations, and work consistently over time. Schein (2004) differentiates basic assumptions from what the anthropological community calls *dominant value orientations* on the basis that a dominant orientation is the preferred action in a culture that still entertains other viable alternatives. Members of the group could use, with justification, a different alternative and still remain coherent with the overall culture of the group. Group members would find actions based on any other supposition unthinkable. Indeed, for group members to have suppositions other than the basic assumption may not even be possible. This could be the psychological underpinning of patterned thinking associated with the term paradigm and the inherent difficulty posed by attempting to think in a different paradigm or what is currently termed “thinking outside the box.”

Basic assumptions are those almost subliminal modes of behavior that are neither questioned nor confronted. To do so causes a disruption in our cognitive and interpersonal world, unleashing considerable anxiety. Schein (2004) asserts that the human mind seeks a cognitive and interpersonal safe harbor. An assault on a person’s basic assumptions creates anxiety and defensiveness. Schein relates, “Rather than tolerating such anxiety levels, we tend to want to perceive the events of the world around us as congruent with our assumptions, even if that means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to ourselves what may be going on around us” (p. 22).

Schein's (2004) use of a three-tiered process to characterize and examine organizational culture provides a valuable and flexible approach upon which to frame this study of culture's influences in a higher education merger. What Schein does not address are the effects of congruence between the aspects of artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions, which forms a significant part of the study presented here.

Chapter Three: Design and Methods

Despite the fact that few mergers between higher education institutions have occurred in the United States, they could reasonably increase in number in the future. Few investigations have been conducted into the effects of merger on the cultures of the institutions involved and there are no identifiable studies that take an ethnographic approach to the stories, representations, and experiences of those involved in the merger process. The purpose of this study is to explore what is the influence of organizational culture in higher education institutional mergers from the perspective of academic and operational professionals' experiences with the event. The questions to be addressed are:

1. When higher education organizations merge, what is the influence of organizational culture?
2. What are the perceptions of the academic and operational professionals to the cultural development of a merged higher education institution?
3. How do these professionals deal with the congruence and incongruence between organizational symbols, espoused values, and the basic assumptions of cultural features?

Methodology

This study took a qualitative case study approach to the examination of culture in a merged higher education organization because narratives of those involved bring to light more subtle findings that can be related to artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions (Schein, 2004). This means that the experiences and accounts of the participants were used to develop rich descriptions of what influence organizational culture played in merged higher education organizations. Three sources of data were

collected to address the research questions. The first is semi-structured interview data, the second is drawings created by the interviewees' of how they saw themselves and their situation during the merger process, and the third is document analyses from the merged university and its antecedent institutions, particularly documentation of mission, values and merger plans regarding operations or human relations and the strategies devised to shape or influence the organization during the merger.

Case Study Participant Data: Narrative Inquiry in a Native-View Paradigm

In describing an anthropological approach to corporations, Gregory (1983) comments that it entails studying participants' views about all aspects of life in the corporation. These aspects include work, work practices, technologies, terminology, physical settings, and myths/stories promulgated in the workplace. Gregory cautions that for the researcher to "select these for special emphasis says more about the culture of the researcher than the researched, for whom all culture is equally taken for granted" (p. 359). In the native-view, the participants' culture becomes the theoretical underpinning through which behavior is studied, not through the external culture of the researcher. Gregory's rationale for the study of native-views "comes from the belief that meanings are linked to behavior, and those who take this perspective define culture as a system of meanings" (p. 163).

Merriam (1998) describes case study as an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of a single episode in a social unit where the episode or unit is "a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p.27). Merriam draws three distinctions when it comes to case study. The first is case studies are particularistic in what can be revealed about a certain phenomenon arising from puzzling situations in everyday practice. The second is

that case studies are descriptive in a thick manner, exploring many variables and their interaction over a period of time. Third, case studies are heuristic by expanding the reader's knowledge about the phenomenon with the discovery of new meaning.

Merriam (1998) stresses the use of categorizing elements of the data obtained so that the researcher can reach across data sources, condense the data, and arrive at similarities or dissimilarities without an emphasis on their theoretical meanings. Schein (2004) questions the use of such categorization or classification systems on the basis that "these tend to be so vast and detailed that cultural essence becomes difficult to discern" (p. 18). Rosen (1991) seems to compliment Schein's assessment when he states, "Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it" (p.280). Instead of categorization schemes, this study utilized narrative inquiry as a more appropriate technique both to gather and analyze the interview data.

Connelly and Chandinin (1990) describe narrative inquiry as, "the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). The narrative inquiry is a way for the researcher to take a person's story about his or her experiences in a situation and construct a narrative of that account, essentially allowing a reader to live vicariously that experience as though it were his or her own. The semi-structured interview protocol is found in Appendix A. I also used respondent drawings of their pre and post-merger perceptions as part of the data collection process, so the questions refer to drawings. The use of drawing is further explained later in this methods section.

In commenting on narrative inquiry with a native view, Schwartzman (1993) writes, "this approach recognizes that anthropologists must both understand and work within native cultural systems, but they must also question and attempt to go beyond

them by adopting a comparative and critical perspective on their research” (p. 35).

Merriam (1998) relates, “The text is analyzed by the techniques of a particular discipline or perspective” (p. 158). Qualitative case study data are interested in how the “story narratives vary across cultures, together with the cultural patterning of customs, beliefs, values, performance, and the social contexts found in the narrative” (Merriam, 1998 p. 158). The perspective Merriam calls for was, in this case study, the narratives of participants’ patterning of customs, beliefs, values, performance, and social contexts in the merger process through the view of Schein’s (2004) process of establishing cultural features. This means the narratives were analyzed to elicit the themes of culture from pre-merger to post-merger. These themes were described through Schein’s idea of artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions.

The first research question, “When higher education organizations merge, what is the influence of organizational culture?” will be addressed by a synthesis of information gathered from addressing research questions one and two, and the other two portions of the methodology, participant drawings and the organization document review. See Appendix A. for a listing of questions that will be explored with participants; these questions could be modified somewhat depending on the participant’s responses and depending on the information received from the participant drawings. I recognize the fluidity of data and analysis attendant of an ethnographic approach and I will allow the questions, analysis of data, and the development of themes to go where the data take me.

The synthesis of the stories will also relate whether the participant thought particular organizational action(s), as described in his or her story, was successful or not, or whether the organizational action produced heightened levels of anxiety for the

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participant. The expression of anxiety will indicate whether the participant felt comfortable with the “fit” in the direction of culture reinterpretation in the merger process. These elements of the participants’ narrative will be used to address the second research question, “What are the perceptions of the academic and operational professionals to the cultural development of a merged higher education institution?”

The narrative of each participant’s story will be related in a manner that notes their perception of these artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions from pre to post-merger. Together with documentation from the merged organization, these narratives provide information to address the third research question, “How do these professionals deal with the congruence and incongruence between organizational symbols, espoused values, and the basic assumptions of culture?”

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) deemphasize the use of the terms reliability and validity in the analysis of narrative inquiry data, preferring to use the terms *apparency* and *verisimilitude*. Apparency is something that is readily understood, evident, or perceived. Verisimilitude is the appearance that something is true or real and is a more appropriate gauge of the narrative’s strength. Rosen (1991) reinforces that ethnography involves both data collection and analysis being intertwined with each other, with interpretation of the events described serving as the source of meaning. This is not to say that the results of this study will be satisfied solely with the appearance that something is right or true. The narratives of the participants will be viewed through the conceptual framework for themes that address the research questions.

An independent peer-debriefer assessed all participant recordings to the transcripts to verify the accuracy of the transcripts.

Participant Drawings

The old adage goes “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Yet, the use of participant drawings is a relatively new technique in qualitative research in which adults are the subjects (Haney, Russell, and Bebell, 2004). The rationale to use this technique derives from the inexact definition or conception of the term “culture.” The methodological conundrum in gathering the stories of participants engaged in activities that have cultural meaning is that each person has his or her own conception of what the term culture means. The participant may not even use the word *culture* in that conception. In one sense, for this type of ethnographic research, that is a good thing, because the purpose is to gather the perceptions and stories of people and look for commonalities or dissimilarities within a particular perspective or conceptual framework. The disadvantage is, however, that the researcher can be met with questions like, “what do you mean by culture, what do you mean by enculturation, or what do you mean by organizational culture?” A concept like culture is easy to say, but not easy to associate to the events of life. It is a reasonable expectation that any attempt to explain what I mean by the term culture risks contaminating the participant’s own impressions or frame of reference on the subject. Having the participant draw a picture that portrays how he or she sees himself or herself in a situation, without using the word culture, serves as a vehicle for the researcher to engage the participant in further meaningful dialogue. The drawings were completed prior to the interview portion, but during the same contact session with each participant.

Drawing has been used for a number of years in research dealing with children in both education and as a therapy following various types of trauma (Haney et al., 2004).

Yet, Haney et al. relate that drawing is seldom used in educational research relating to adults or to the enterprise of education. This exclusion would reasonably include higher education. The rationale for the efficacy of what drawings offer the researcher is summarized by Weber and Mitchell (1995) who said, “drawings offer a different glimpse into human sense-making than written or spoken texts do because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious” (p. 34). Ely (1973) includes pictures along with words spoken, words written, graphics, and numbers as symbolic representations of experience designed to reduce uncertainty. Merriam (1998), when differentiating qualitative from quantitative research says, “words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon” (p. 8).

Prior to the interview portion beginning, each participant was asked to draw, in consecutive order, two pictures with prompts that do not use the word culture,

1. The organizational culture at the employer before the merger, using the prompt, “Think about the work and atmosphere that you feel best represents your workplace at (name of the prior institution). Draw a picture of yourself working for (name of prior institution).”
2. The present organizational culture in the merged institution, using the prompt, “Think about the work and atmosphere that you feel best represents your workplace at (name of the merged institution).” See Appendix B. for a representation of what the drawing pages and instruction looked like.

Each participant was asked to explain the meaning of the pre and post-merger drawing. These explanations were then used to explore and elicit additional narrative

detail in the remaining interview. The coding system that was used with the drawings is called holistic coding (Haney et al., 2004), which is based on “an overall judgment about how some overall or holistic aspect of a situation is depicted” (p. 254). In this case the holistic coding of the drawings was,

1. How does the participant describe the pre-merger drawing?
2. How does the participant describe the post-merger drawing?
3. What changes do they articulate between the two drawings?
4. What, if any, meaning does the participant attribute to the changes?

An independent peer-debriefer also assessed whether the interpretations I take from the participant’s descriptions of the drawings were consistent with those descriptions.

Document Analysis

The documents that were of special interest for this project are those having to do with surveys of employee satisfaction, reports from consulting firms having to do with culture management during a merger, and public pronouncements of intentions such as mission, vision, values, goals, or written materials that sanction the organization’s intentions. Despite pledges of cooperation with this study by the executive management of the subject institution, my relationship with the institution changed during the preparation of this proposal (see the limitations of the study section). The willingness of the institutional leadership to be wholly forthcoming with a complete listing of the previously detailed documentation is impossible to gauge for I was not privy to written sources such as meeting minutes or financial statements. What documents are provided was used to gain a better idea of institutional intentions regarding culture management

during and after the merger. This was then compared to the narrative interviews and the drawings in an effort to address, primarily, the first research question, “When higher education organizations merge, what is the impact on organizational culture?” However, the documents were also able to address aspects of the other two research questions.

The Setting

All the names for people and locations in this study are pseudonyms. The setting for this study was Davis University, a large (approximately 13,000 students), private, not-for-profit university that offers associates’, bachelors’, and masters’ degrees, primarily in business and accounting, but also in allied health, nursing, and computer information systems. The university has 30 locations in the Midwest. Davis University traces its origin back to the Culvertown Business College in 1866 and has developed a reputation of providing a practical, real-world business education for its students (Moceri. 1990). Davis University was formed in 2000 from the merger of three legally distinct and separately accredited (North Central Association) private, not-for-profit colleges: Glen Lincoln College, located primarily in the Clare City/Huntington region; and Davis College, located primarily in western Michigan. The third partner in the merger was the Decatur College of Business, located primarily in the Decatur, Michigan area, which had “merged” with Davis College through the governance mechanism of a shared board of trustees, but not through Internal Revenue Service designation, operations or accreditation, in 1985. The central administration and executive management offices of the merged Davis University are on the campus located in Culvertown, Michigan.

To put the merger of these three schools into a more accurate context requires delving into the history and relationships of these institutions in greater depth. From its

inception in 1866, the Culvertown Business College operated as a proprietary, for-profit company. In 1910 the struggling school was deserted by its then present owner Aaron E. Parrish, who also stripped the operation's bank account (Moceri, 1990). Michael E. Davis, then a faculty member, rescued the school and became its owner and president a short time later. M. E. Davis's tenure as president continued until his death in 1959. During this time period there were several changes in the school's name that reflected Davis's ownership, eventually settling on the Davis Institute immediately after World War II. Davis Institute converted from a for-profit to a private, not-for-profit corporation in 1954 and changed its name to Davis College in 1964 (Moceri, 1990).

The hairbreadth escape from bankruptcy in 1910 formed a survival story that had profound effects on M.E. Davis and the protégés he developed within the organization. It is significant that his long tenure of 49 years allowed this ethos of financial growth and fiscal responsibility to permeate all aspects of the school.

Under Davis's leadership, the family-owned business acquired numerous other proprietary business schools in other Michigan locations. Many of these later became campuses of Davis College (Moceri, 1990). In 1957, M.E. Davis purchased the Saginaw Business Institute and added campuses in Clare City, Manorville, and Amity. The Saginaw Business Institute was renamed as Glen Lincoln Junior College in 1986. Another of the many proprietary school purchases made by M. E. Davis during the period of expansion following World War II was the Decatur Business Institute in 1954. The Institute continued to operate as a private, for-profit corporation, changing its name to the Decatur College of Business in 1962, until its accreditation by North Central in 1974. Davis College's accreditation with North Central followed in 1976 (Moceri, 1990).

The institutional relationship between Davis College and the Decatur College of Business is complicated by the fact that M. E. Davis's successor, Robert Smith (who married M. E. Davis's daughter, Margaret, in 1944) was named the president of both the Decatur Business Institute (for-profit) and the Davis Institute (not-for-profit) after taking over from M. E. Davis, upon his passing in 1959. Smith continued as president of both organizations until his retirement in 1977 (Moceri, 1990).

Donald Jones was named president of Davis College following Smith's retirement and began the task of drawing together the disparate elements of the Davis/Smith family enterprise. In 1985 Davis College acquired the Decatur College of Business. This acquisition was a merger in one sense for there was a connection between the boards of trustees of each organization and a common chief executive officer in Donald Jones, yet the Decatur College of Business maintained its own president, James Wright. The boards coordinated together and acted as a policymaking body, but remained distinct. Each institution maintained legal autonomy as separate non-profit corporations and maintained autonomous accreditation through North Central. Glen Lincoln Junior College governance continued under the Davis family corporation called Davis Schools, Inc. (Moceri, 1990).

In 1997 Jones, together with the boards of Davis College, the Decatur College of Business and Davis Schools, Inc. gathered the three parts of the enterprise under a non-profit corporation called Davis Educational System, Inc. (DES). At the same time the "junior" was dropped from the name of Glen Lincoln Junior College. The "super board" of DES actually consisted of selected board members from the three schools and the Davis/Smith family, and served as a holding company and central policymaking body for

the three institutions with Donald Jones as chancellor. Plans for the eventual consolidation of all boards of trustees and separate foundations continued through the remainder of the 1990s, culminating with the actual full-asset merger of all three schools under one board in 2000. Donald Jones retired in that year and Gregory Deemer, a former member of the Glen Lincoln College Board of Trustees was named president of the newly created Davis University. Since the merger in 2000, the university combined curricula and business operations resulting in the start of unified programs, courses, and administration in the fall of 2003. The university received its first, united accreditation from North Central as Davis University in the fall of 2004.

Research Participants

The members of Davis University who were asked to volunteer as participants in this study were obtained from three hierarchical categories in the organization:

1. Staff – generally those who are hourly workers or those who do not manage others.
2. Middle management – those who supervise others, but do not have decision-making responsibilities for strategic directions. Persons in this category might also have teaching responsibilities.
3. Executive management - those who supervise others as leaders of a campus or university-wide area of responsibility. Persons in this category would have titles such as “vice president of...” or “dean of...”

The rationale for this selection was to obtain a vertically stratified sampling of persons from different hierarchical levels of the organization. It is possible that the same events could be created or enacted differently at different levels of the hierarchy,

depending on a persons' access to information and contacts. The goal is to have a representative from each of the three pre-merger schools in each of the three hierarchical categories.

All persons asked to participate had at least three years of employment with one of the pre-merger schools prior to 2000. In this way, it can be reasonably assured that each person was acculturated to the norms and culture of the pre-merger school. Every effort was made to assure approximately equal representation from all three pre-merger institutions. The Davis University Human Resources Department had informed me that 80 to 90 persons in the system met the criteria of positions held and length of service with one of the three pre-merger institutions. Invitations to participate in the study were mailed with a self-addressed, stamped reply envelope to all those who qualified. I disclosed my prior contact with and past working relationship with each person agreeing to be interviewed. Where possible, I did not interview those who I have worked with closely in the past. Letters of permission were mailed to those selected with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope to me. Please see Appendix C for sample of the letters of invitation and permission form that was used.

The methods to assure confidentiality used in this study were designed to make every effort that no user identifiable information is used. All participants were identified simply by job category, or a description that is participant unidentifiable, and his or her former association with one of the pre-merger institutions. When referred to in the findings of the study, each person had a pseudonym assigned which did not correspond to the actual gender of that person. Exceptions to this were made only if the stories or drawings of a person are conveyed in such a way as to make necessary a female or male

voice. Those pseudonyms were used throughout all materials such as transcripts and labels on drawings. No participant was told the name of any other participant. All interviews were also audio recorded and I retained the tapes. There was a peer debriefing of the written transcripts to the recorded conversations to assure the accuracy of transcription.

Any other areas of confidentiality or protection of the participant's rights necessary were consistent with and approved by the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) as per Michigan State University policy.

Limitations of the Study

I am a former faculty member of Davis College from 1994 to 2000 and served as Director of Faculty Development for Davis University from 2000 to June 2004. The university reorganized its administrative structure in June 2004, resulting in the elimination of the faculty development director position along with 11 other positions at that time. The planning for this study was already well under way. At the time of my separation I received confirmation that the previous consent given by Davis's President Deemer regarding the University's participation and the cooperation of the organization would be honored, and my progress would not be impeded by the fact that I was no longer working for the university.

It is quite natural and reasonable that an observer would have concern over my objectivity in exploring the culture of this organization on two grounds. First, that I was employed by that organization and second, that the organization recently severed that employment relationship. In addressing the first concern, studying the culture of an organization to which I was employed could, indeed, present bias if that employment was

the only one I held with a college or university. However, I have also held faculty appointments at the State University of New York at Stony Brook (five years) and with the University of Pittsburgh (seven years) prior to joining Davis College in 1994. My cultural paradigm of higher education is far wider than just Davis University or the pre-merger institution of Davis College. This breadth of experience diminishes the chance that I will have a bias toward the culture of either Davis University or College.

Familiarity with the institution can be considered advantageous when using a native-view paradigm since the researcher is better able to decipher and interpret the cultural signals of the organization due to a more intimate knowledge of the organization (Gregory, 1983).

The second concern is more difficult to deal with for no person whose job has been eliminated can be said to enjoy the experience. It is natural to have resentment over the action, if for no other reason than the disruption caused to one's life and family. I was not spared that disruption. I secured employment teaching health care administration, my original discipline, at a public university in Michigan after five months unemployment. In addition, I did not suffer severe financial hardship since the separation package from Davis University was sufficient until new employment was obtained. As a self-reflective person, I psychologically put my job loss into the context of my wider career, and although it was not wanted, I "made my peace" with the event.

At the same time, my observations and experiences as an insider to the cultural patterns and events of the merger are something that cannot be dismissed from the research and analysis of this study. The fact of I, as an insider, have a perspective upon which to reflect on the data obtained is noted by Gregory (1983) and Schein (2004) as an

insight that Schein says allows the insider to offer, “learn[ed] semantic nuances, how one set of categories relates to other set of categories, how means are translated into behavior, and how such behavioral rules apply situationally (p. 170).” Morgan (1997) relates, “It is difficult to judge a culture from the outside (p. 125).” In order to provide a counterpoint to my bias, I focused descriptions and translations of events without ascribing judgments of right or wrong to them.

Organization of Data Presentation

A number of options are available to convey the results of information gleaned from document analysis, participant drawings, and participant interviews. The perspective that offers the clearest presentation of the data is a simple time line that presents the data on a continuum from prior to the merger to events that are approximately through the time of the interviews. A chronological approach allows for a recounting of the events as the participants remembered them together with incorporation of any institutional documents that pertained to those events. As such, a time line also allowed for the identification of themes, differences in participant perceptions of pre-merger organizational culture, and variations that might account for level of employment status. The simplicity of a time line allows a correlation of information that is not readily available to the other perspectives previously mentioned, for this is how the participants experienced the events. For these reasons the data will be described in a chronological fashion. However, I will use associations of stories and events relating to participant hierarchical level in the organization or pre-merger affiliation, but the chronological approach offers the framework for the overall presentation of the conversations.

The participants were not able to always provide exact dates to the events they related, owing most likely, to the function memory plays in recounting events of several years past. For that reason the data time line will be comprised of two phases; the pre-merger phase of 1997 to 2000 and the merger phase of 2000 to 2005.

Chapter Four: Results

It is necessary to introduce the interview participants and their pre-merger institution affiliation. All participants either chose their own pseudonym or accepted the one I chose. I have also included a comment on the prior relationship that I had with each participant.

Betty: A staff level member affiliated with Davis College (DC). I met Betty several times prior to the interview, although we worked on different campuses of DC. I solicited her help with a faculty development project about six months prior to my departure from Davis.

Redeye: A staff level member affiliated with the Decatur College of Business (DCB). I never met Redeye before the interview.

Madge: A staff level member affiliated with Davis College. Madge and I knew each other for approximately eight years. I worked with Madge at an admissions event in 1997. Otherwise, we were only acquaintances.

Jordan: A middle management member affiliated with Glen Lincoln College (GLC). Jordan and I met a few times at large, combined academic meetings for faculty of all three schools.

Bobbi: A middle management member affiliated with Glen Lincoln College. Bobbi and I met a few times at large, combined academic meetings for faculty of all three schools.

Tim: A middle management member affiliated with the Decatur College of Business. I never met Tim prior to the interview.

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page 10

Mary: A middle management member affiliated with Davis College. Mary and I knew each other for approximately seven years and attended many academic meetings together. Mary worked on a different campus and taught in a different discipline than mine, so we had little day to day working contact.

Jack: An executive/vice president level member affiliated with Davis College. Jack and I knew each other for almost 11 years and had frequent contact with each other, even though we worked in different areas.

Rick: An executive/vice president level member affiliated with the Decatur College of Business. Rick and I knew each other for about five years and we both participated in the Davis Leadership Institute one year.

All participants chose the location of the interviews. There were four interviews conducted on the campuses of Davis University. Three interviews took place in private residences, one occurred in a church, and one was located in a public library. All of the participants except Redeye and Jack expressed some concern for anonymity either in setting the interview appointment or at some point in the interview itself.

The Pre-Merger Phase

When I asked the first participant to choose a pseudonym to protect his confidentiality, the last name I would have guessed is "Redeye." Redeye explained that it was a nickname from his childhood and that no one at Davis would know to whom it referred. Overall, Redeye did not appear to be too concerned with being seen with me for the interview took place at one of the Sparkstown campus of Davis University's. I asked

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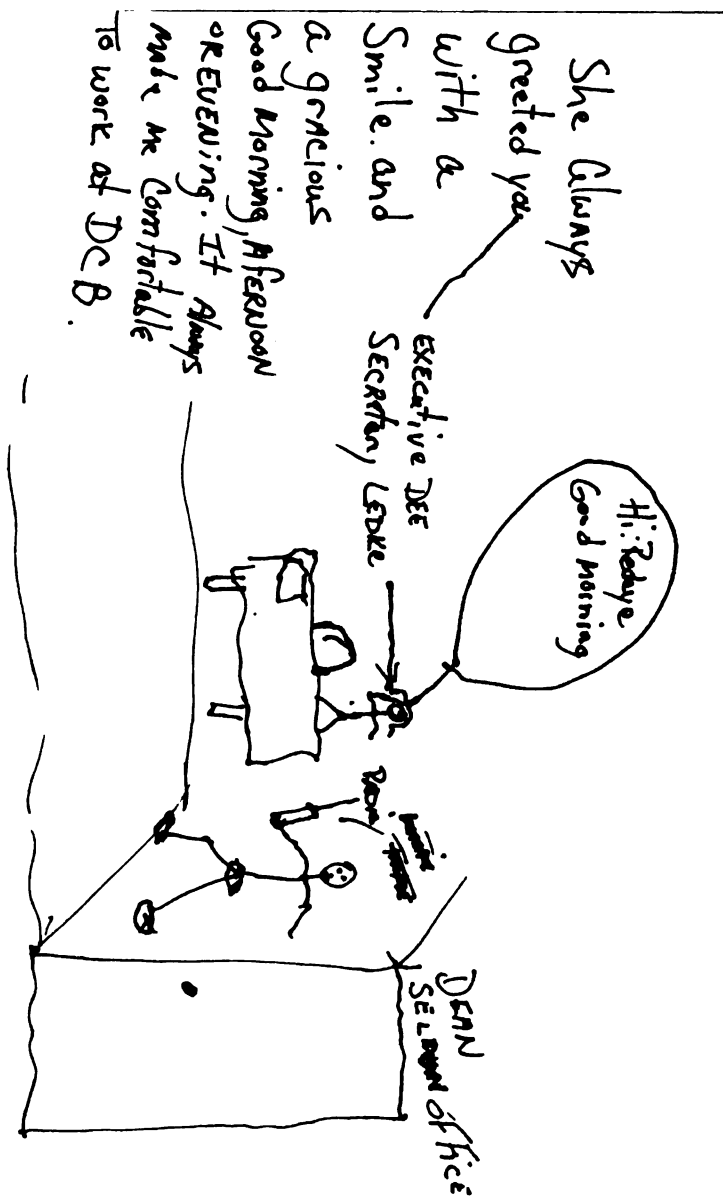
Redeye to describe the pre-merger drawing (Figure 1) he made. After again apologizing for the crudeness of his artwork he said,

Well, to me it was family. When you'd come to work in the morning or afternoon or evening or whatever it was, you'd walk into the Dean's office and the secretary would always greet you with a smile and act like she was happy that you were there, made you feel comfortable, and that's probably one of the reasons why I'm still here, is because of the fact that it was always comfortable.

Redeye started with the Decatur College of Business in 1990 on a part-time basis and his employment continued as part-time in a non-teaching staff position to the present. He liked the hours since when he started Redeye had retired from another profession. Redeye related that in his DCB staff position, he was initially responsible for 13 other people, all of whom were also part-time.

When I first mentioned "Davis" to Redeye his eyes squinted a bit and I asked when he first heard of Davis College. "Ninety-eight I believe it was. Then we started decreasing in numbers, after we became Davis. That's when they got rid of 29 people; it was sprung on everyone." Redeye continued, "It was shocking. So my initial take on Davis was cold the way it happened. You clean house and don't let people know ahead of time they are losing their jobs." Redeye said he was designated to tell the people involved. He declined to do that and apparently did not suffer any repercussions owing to his refusal to perform that notification. When I asked Redeye how this mass termination of people all at once made him feel he said, "This thing was utterly shocking to me. I'm looking at these people and thinking 'wow', what's going on here?" Redeye then related that he was at a golf outing later that afternoon when he was called back to the campus

DCB Flint - Jennings Road



Redeye 9/13/05
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Figure 1. Redeye: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

because they were receiving bomb threats. “That was just people that were upset with what happened,” Redeye said. He seemed to say this in a way that indicated more sympathy with, rather than recrimination towards those who had made the bomb threats.

Redeye’s reference to personnel cuts in 1998 came before the formal merger occurred in 2000. We did not talk further as to whether these actions were planned by the Decatur College of Business before the establishment of DES or if the cuts were a result of DES directives. Either way, large scale personnel cuts were not mentioned by any other participant from any of the pre-merger institutions.

Tim also used the idea of family when drawing his pre-merger perception of DCB when I met him in his home (figure 2.). In describing the pre-merger drawing Tim said, “First off, happiness, receptive, productive, a family type business where everyone works together to accomplish goals. A nice, pleasant place to work, but with that also very effective.” I then asked, “I see the sun is shining here. Is that a kind of sign of happiness? Did you feel satisfied and fulfilled in working at DCB before the merger?” Tim answered “yes.” He continued by saying that his perception of the highest value for the organization at that time was customer service.

There’s no way you can just preach someone customer service. I think the customer service goes back to the resources. I had the resources to give them the answers. I can be helpful to them. I can take the question and go beyond what they ask me and assist them and give them what they need. That, to me, is good customer service.

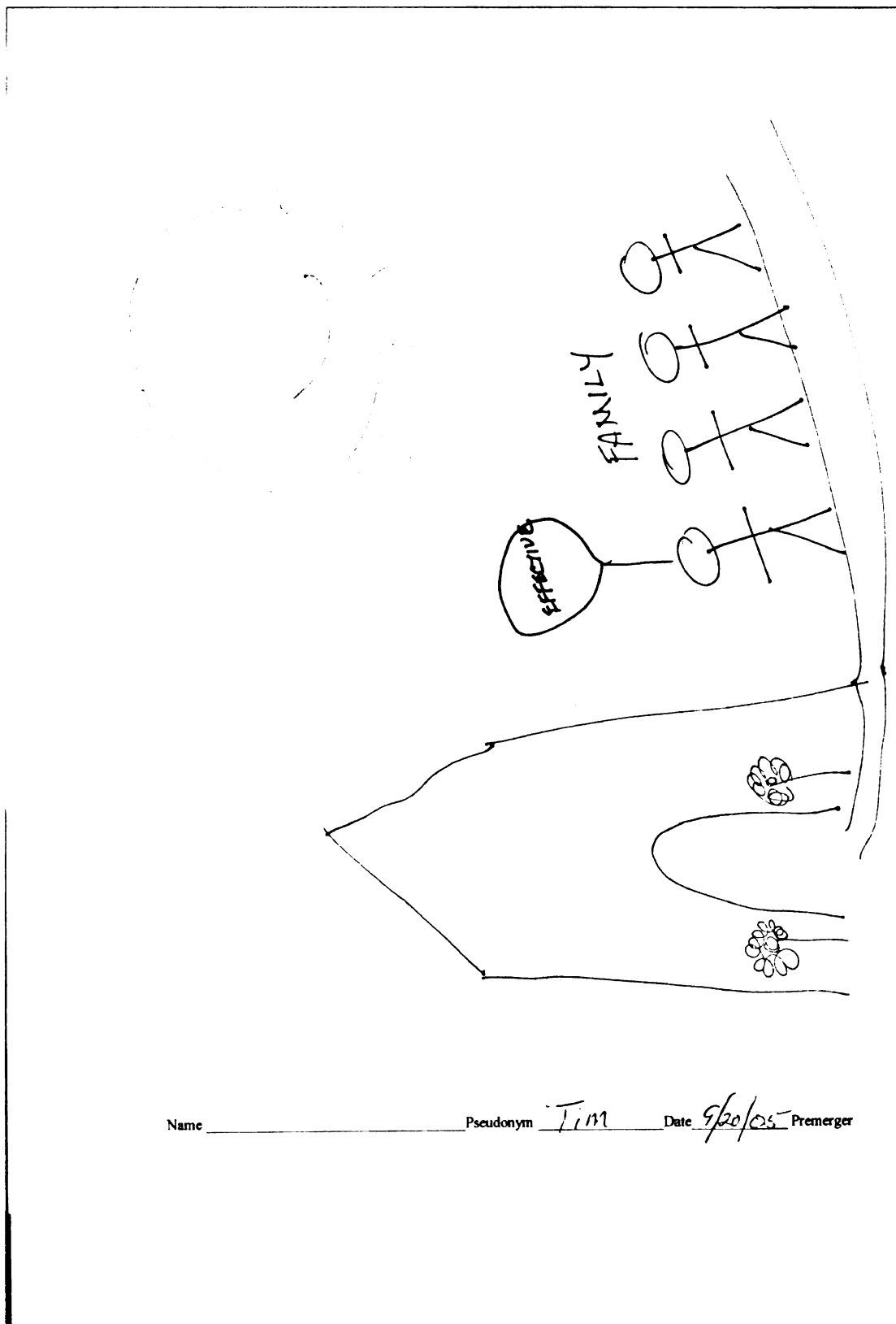


Figure 2. Tim: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

Tim's perception of the pre-merger DCB seems to be one of being provided the support (resources) necessary to do his job of career counseling and student internship placement in local companies.

I met with Mary in a public library conference room in Culvertown. The setting was at her request to better assure anonymity. Mary had a similar impression of an organizationally supportive pre-merger environment at Davis College; except she described her pre-merger drawing (figure 3) as a more work-oriented, collegial place where, "It's colorful, it's open, it's fun! It is supposed to represent the way it used to be where risk taking was good, everyone was on an equal plane. There really weren't any barriers. We had fun. We tried stuff. It was a good thing." Mary went on to add,

We were encouraged not to take the old business school model. At least in my experience, it was go ahead and take a risk, be creative feeling no barriers. The campus, in particular that I was on was like a skunk work campus. We were always trying new stuff. Doors were open. That's why I have lots of curly Q's and lines going over each other, because there was no real hierarchy. Suits were an antithesis, you know, we were more like we wore blue jeans and Davis tee-shirts and sweatshirts more than anything else. We had toys in our offices. All sorts of personal stuff... [student] learning was the key.

Mary's comment about toys and personal items was apparently made in a manner to draw a contrast to the current environment, stated later in the conversation. Offices on

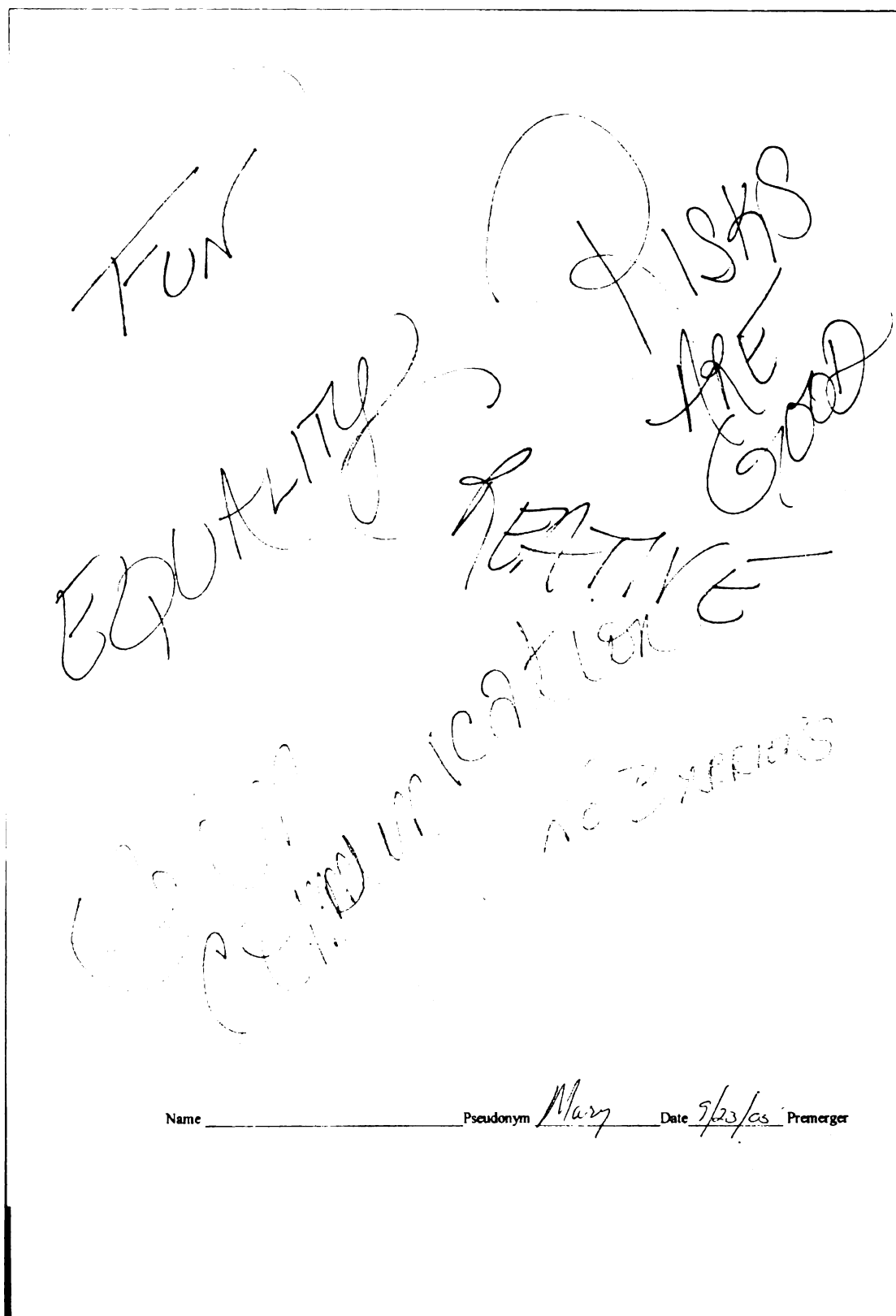


Figure 3. Mary: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

the campus where she works had, within the past year, mandated that personal effects be removed. The only exceptions were diplomas and a few family pictures.

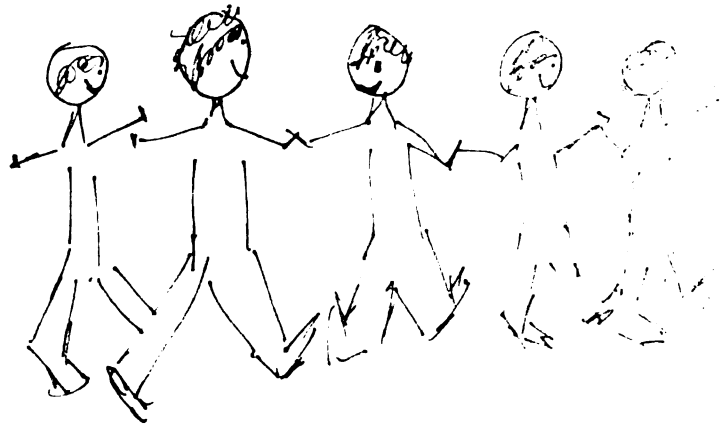
Jordan's comments about the working environment and culture were derived from his description of the Glen Lincoln College (GLC) pre-merger drawing (figure 4).

There is an obvious leader. The leader is a little bit bigger than the other figures, not significantly so. Overall people look towards the leader, most of the people.

They are relatively happy, as far as the work environment. They have pretty good times. You see that they all have their hands joined or they are close to each other indicating that for the most part, people get along. There seems to be a working relationship. Everyone seems to be going in the same way. There are a couple of people who are looking away from the leader and on occasion people come and go and have other avenues to pursue. It doesn't seem to be upsetting the other people. There doesn't seem to be anger or so forth that they are leaving. It is a somewhat family-type of an environment. Disagreements were handled openly and could be handled on the spot.

When I asked for an example of a disagreement, Jordan replied that wages and financial compensation for the staff and faculty was a point of contention for several years prior to the merger, but that disagreement did not unduly influence the working environment in a negative fashion. Jordan said the reason for this was the ability to communicate with leaders. "It (salary) was a big factor, but you had easy access to the decision makers," Jordan said.

You were involved in the decision-making that went on even though sometimes it was overridden, you still had a piece. You knew what was happening. There



Name _____ Pseudonym Jordan Date 9/19/05 Premerger

Figure 4. Jordan: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

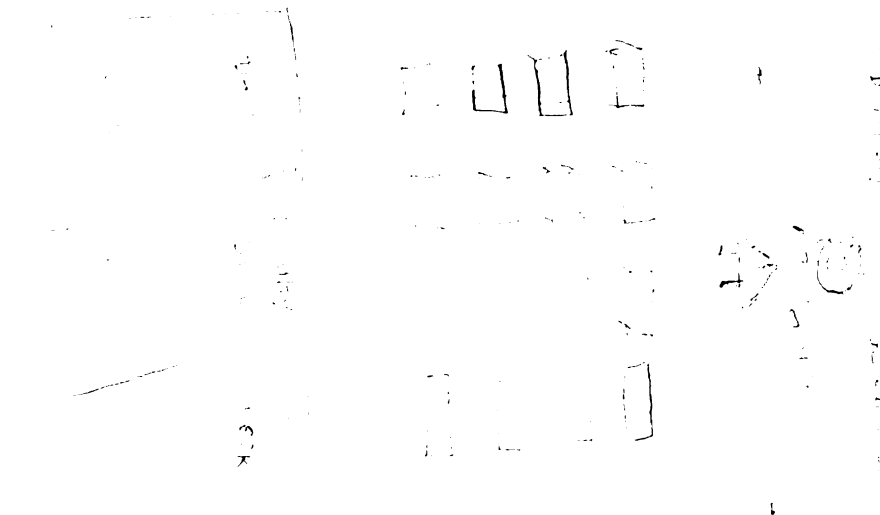
wasn't uncertainty day to day of what the work environment was like. I would particular role. Certainly, that had limits, but you had a say, your voice was heard, say, to my knowledge, everyone on the campus felt empowered over their own let me put it that way. Not always agreed, which was the day to day frustration of any job.

Bobbi initially described a somewhat different aspect of GLC prior to the merger (figure 5), the physical setting prior to 1990.

It is a very traditional high school setting. Teacher in the front, chalkboard behind him, student sitting in rows, made up for a very left-brain learner, you know what I mean. We did the traditional classroom setting even though the work we were doing was college material and we were using college textbooks. Our offices, where the faculty work, were very small, they weren't very user-friendly. We had a lot of desks with very little room because the desks were real close together. There wasn't a whole lot of thought put into the instructor's work space, but we got along. There were probably six of us in a room smaller than the one we are in now, nah, it had to a little bigger.

Bobbi and I met at the Manorville campus building. The office we met in was approximately 8 by 11 feet and was Bobbi's office exclusively, owing to her present position as a coordinator. When reflecting on what it was like to work for GLC personally. Bobbi replied,

It was strict. I felt a little constrained because we were all supposed to, well, we didn't use a lot of different methods of teaching and we were supposed to be



Name _____ Pseudonym Bobbi Date 8/19/05 Premerger

Figure 5. Bobbi: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

pretty straight and narrow. We wore skirts and nylons and high heels and it wasn't a real relaxing situation. It was academic, but it wasn't very relaxing.

Business attire was the norm and was expected because GLC was a career oriented school. When asked how this expectation was communicated to new people at GLC, Bobbi said, "I definitely think it was administratively conveyed. It was expected that you dress up a little more. I don't recall if it was written down, but yes, there was a dress code." She later called the atmosphere very regimented.

The other area that impressed Bobbi about GLC before the merger was the support the institution gave to people who wanted to advance their own education. When GLC was a junior college (called Glen Lincoln Junior College until 1996), Bobbi had the academic credentials to teach at an associate's degree level. When GLC began its quest to offer baccalaureate degrees after 1996, Bobbi was encouraged and financially supported through tuition reimbursement to obtain Masters degree, which was needed to teach in a four-year school. Bobbi described the support as generous and unexpected, given the part-time employment status she had at that time.

All three of the pre-merger schools relied heavily on adjunct faculty as has Davis University after the merger. Bobbi mentioned that when teaching, she was often at the Gearson Campus in the morning and the Manorville Campus in the afternoon. Her feeling was that, at GLC, cooperative faculty sharing between campuses was common. Now, at DC, faculty only taught on one campus; they were not allowed to teach on another campus.

I met with Betty in her home for the interview. She described the pre-merger drawing (figure 6) of her campus within Davis College (DC) as having a throne room,

which represented the Admissions Office. “Whatever they wanted we were supposed to supply for them and the rest of us, whether it was the Business Office or the Registrar’s Office, where I was associated back then.” Betty’s present functions centered in the systems support area of Davis University and that was how I came to know her in our few contacts since the merger.

In looking at Betty’s pre-merger drawing, another area, the slave’s quarters, stood out and gave greater appreciation to the meaning of that phrase listed directly under the Registrar’s Office notation. Betty continued, “That’s kind of the way it was because we had to work for the man. I just remember different things about what we had to do.” Betty spoke in a slightly different tone, presumably imitating a person from the Admission’s Office, “We need this information and we need it right now.” Returning to her identity Betty said, “Well okay I have this stack of diplomas for graduates and they want their diplomas right now, too. I got into trouble with the dean a couple of times because I refused to drop what I was doing for the student to answer the call to Admissions.” Again taking on the voice of someone from Admissions Betty said, “If we don’t get them in they’re not going to graduate.” “That was always the threat they held over our head,” Betty continued, “enrollment was the goal.”

Betty related that there were a number of questionable enrollment practices that were condoned, and in many cases actively encouraged by local campus leadership to “hike” (Betty’s term) the numbers. Betty attributed this to the intense enrollment competition fostered between campuses by the executive administration. The most prevalent dubious enrollment practice for Betty was to admit students who had

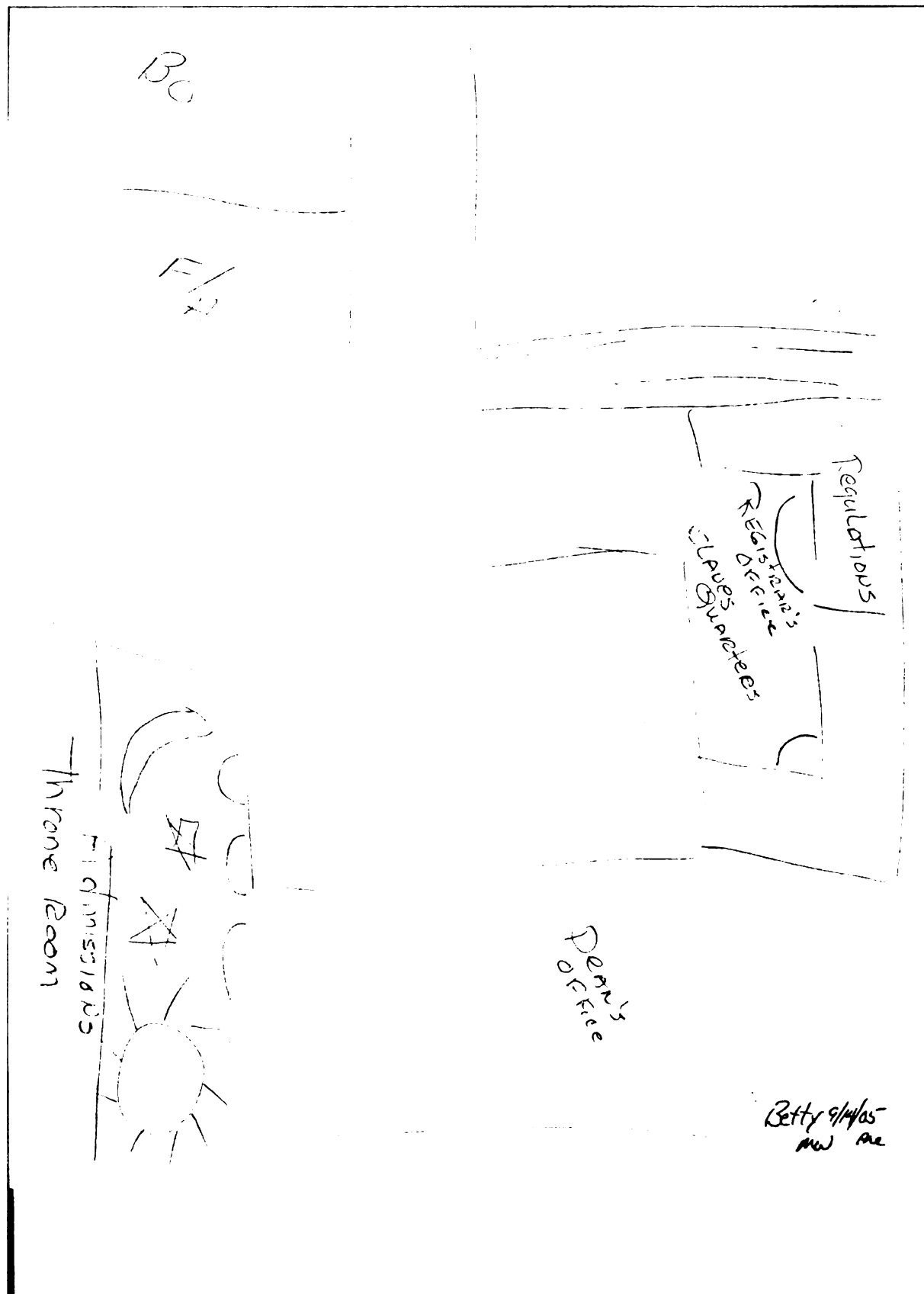


Figure 6. Betty: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

marginal or inadequate academic preparation. She emphasized that the idea was, “get them in the door; get those numbers up. We don’t care what happens to them after you get them in the door!” Attention to retention was eventually given, but Betty characterized it as almost an afterthought, something that simply had to be done because of the poor academic quality of the incoming students. She described the relationships between co-workers as being quite departmentally centered. “There wasn’t a lot (of interaction). If you were in Financial Aid you didn’t go out with people from Admissions.” Admissions had the attitude of “the serfs don’t dinner with the ladies in waiting.”

Betty spoke of a feeling of estrangement between Admissions and the Registrar’s Office that was keenly felt, in her mind, because the Registrar was often a stumbling block to the enrollment objectives of Admissions. She shared that it was not uncommon for the Registrars, who were responsible for transcript evaluation and the acceptance of prior credits, to deny credits that were not earned at an accredited institution or presented with a grade less than “C.” A student may have been previously assured by the Admissions specialist that a certain number of those credits were transferable and based the decision to enter DC on that assurance. When the Registrar’s Office informed the student that the credits were not acceptable, the disappointed student complained to Admissions. Instead of reforming how they counseled prospective students, Admissions staff complained to the Registrar and to the dean to allow the credits and maintain the enrollment count. Betty did not say what the results of these complaints were, but I surmised from the scowl on her face that the Registrar’s Office was often told to accept the transcript as promised by Admissions.

I met with Madge on one of the Davis University campuses at a date and time of her request. It happened there was a fund-raising event that same evening on the campus with a large number of central administration executives present. When Madge arrived, I immediately asked if she would like to postpone the meeting to another time to protect her confidentiality. Although Madge insisted we proceed, her attention seemed often diverted throughout the interview when people passed by the glass door of the conference room.

Figuring prominently in Madge's description of the pre-merger drawing (figure 7) of Davis College was the school's drive and competition to meet enrollment goals. The term "numbers" and a representation of what can be described as a line graph displaying an up and down, but a clear overall upward trend played a central aspect to the illustration. Madge was working in a staff level position in Admissions at a different campus of DC than Betty. As Madge put it,

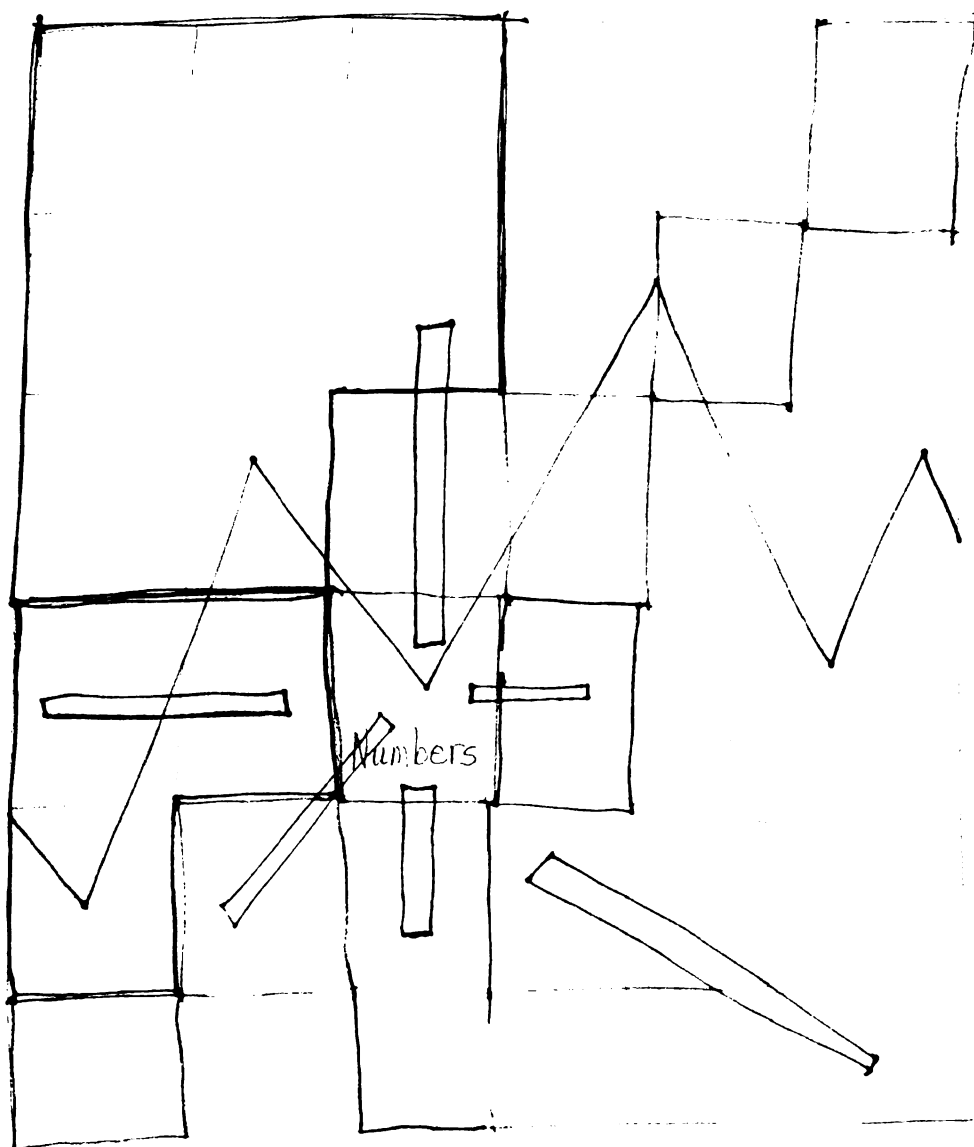
We were focused on what our specific campus was doing at the time. We were very focused on recruiting and getting numbers to meet goals. We were really focused on meeting our budget and recruiting and eliminating [the] competition with other campuses within the system. They (the pre-merger campus) used a competitive edge within the system with the employees to get us to strive toward goals.

Madge explained that this competitive atmosphere was not only between different campuses of the DC system, but also between individual representatives on the same campus. Each admissions representative was measured weekly in the attainment of admissions goals. However, Madge added, "that competition actually used to be a

positive incentive to encourage us to strive much harder for reaching those goals in a deadline period.” The competitive structure that emerged from Madge’s description was between individuals with a given campus to the larger aspect between campuses. This culminated in twice yearly meetings of Admissions representatives from all the campuses in DC where results were compared and awards given to those who exceeded the goals set for them.

Madge’s positive impression of the competition between admissions individuals within each campus and between campuses became somewhat more qualified when she spoke of how the competition was manifested.

Well, as it became more and more of a fight for meeting numbers and getting goals, it caused anxiety between the employees and across the campuses. We weren’t willing to help the other campuses with the best interests of the students; we were just so focused on getting our own goals... You had to be very protective and very guarded with any student you met with because if a student came to meet with you to get information and [then] go home and think about it and talk to a partner, they were designated as your student. You were very prompt in coding that visit (entering it into the computer database) you had and entering notes on the screen so you were territorially setting yourself to meet with this person because if they’ve been privately applied with someone else then that person would get the credit.



Name _____ Pseudonym *Madge* Date *9/21/05* Premerger

Figure 7. Madge: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

Madge saw situations when claiming prospective students caused rifts between admissions representatives and felt that these disputes were often a source of conflicts between representatives. When asked how the management of the admissions department dealt with these conflicts, Madge indicated that there were not specific policies in place to bring order to the conflicts that arose. She said that each representative maintained a private dialogue with his or her manager to indicate when there might be a conflict with someone else and, thereby, express their “ownership” for a particular prospective student.

It seemed that there might be two things happening: competition between representatives and the cooperation needed to meet collective campus goals that were potentially at odds with each other. I asked Madge for her overall impression of which current approach, competition or team-work, predominated at her campus, and she said it was more of a team spirit atmosphere.

Shifting focus to those who worked at an executive leadership level found a general agreement with the preoccupation of enrollment numbers. I met with Rick on a Sunday at his home in suburban Big City. Rick’s affiliation was with DCB, functioning in an academic leadership position.

Rick began describing his drawing (figure 8) by recounting the overall arrangement of the three schools to each other and to the Davis Educational System (DES).

DES was a broad umbrella that oversaw Davis College, Glen Lincoln College, and the Decatur College of Business. That structure had existed back into the 1980’s and possibly a little before that, however, they all operated as independent entities with their own governing boards locally, their own infrastructure under

local management, faculty, curriculum, and so on. DCB was a cash cow for the DES, significantly so. They made good money for DES, more than the other two entities did combined. However, their business model was predicated on enrollment at any cost. They brought people in who had very little hope of actually succeeding and loaded them up with financial aid. They may have stayed five classes and flunked out or, unfortunately, some of them did graduate. Grades were wildly inflated. GPA's were wildly inflated, so they had very little meaning. Sometime in 1997 [enrollment] started to fall off and it is my supposition that the business model came back to bite them in the butt, because they did not have the quality. The word was out there. DCB was considered to be somewhat of a diploma mill, a second rate, the school of last resort.

Rick went on to describe his disappointment with the quality of the employees he found there. "There was an incestuous sense to it," he added. "Many of the employees had their degree from DCB. I know their faculty had their degree from DCB. They may have gone on to get other degrees elsewhere, but their generic education was with DCB." Having a leadership position in academics meant Rick had especially close contact with the faculty. He described situations where some faculty were coming in to work, turning on their computer, and then leaving for another job. One faculty member ran an accounting tutoring lab for additional compensation and accounting was not his credentialed field. No records were kept of his tutoring activities.

Rick indicated that executive management of DCB also had lucrative benefits, saying, "Yes, top management enjoyed the birth of their success. They had generated a lot of cash and revenue for DES and they were compensated handsomely, enjoyed their

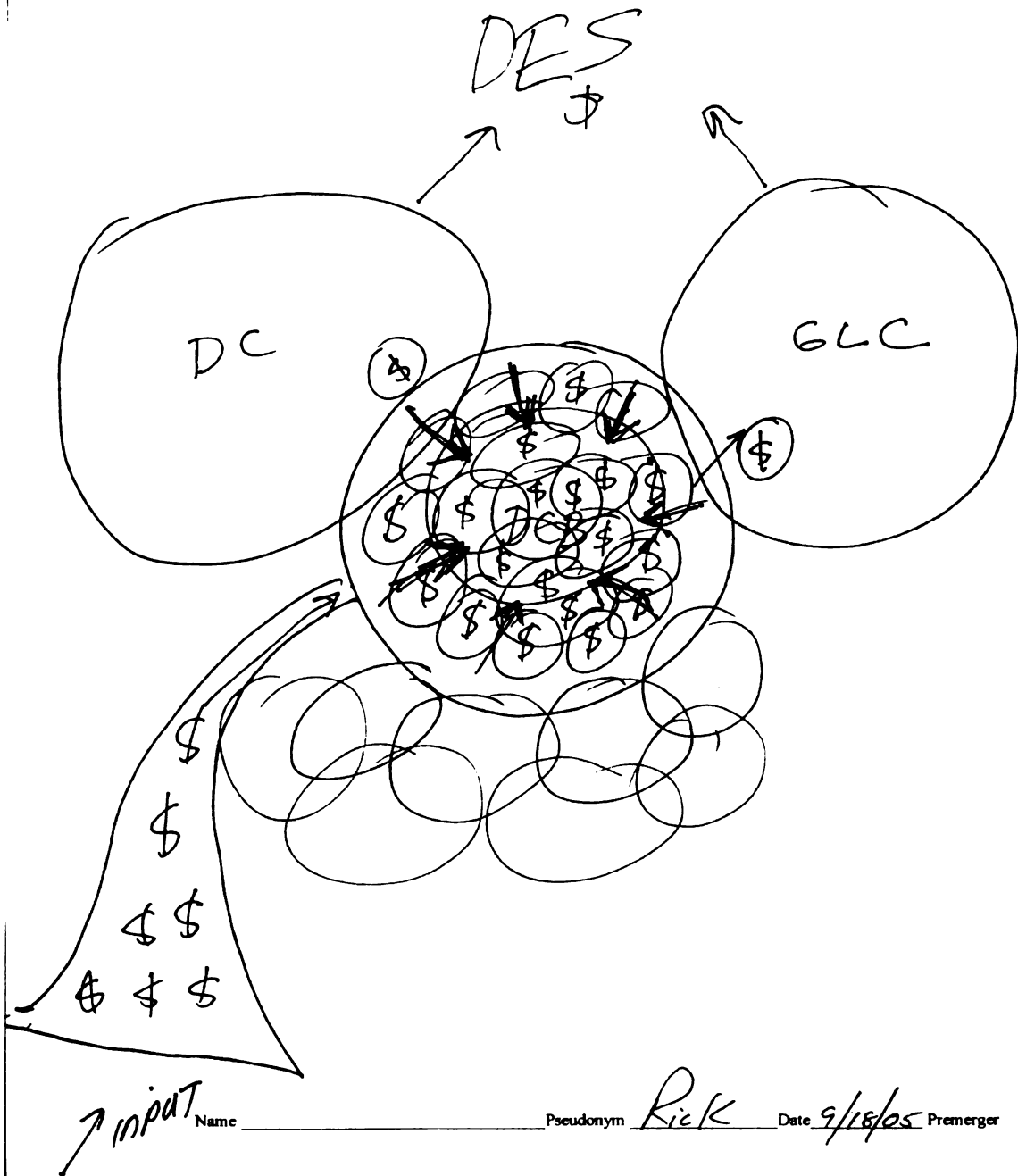


Figure 8. Rick: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

perks, time off, social outings, and had networking expenses if they were in the Big City community.” Rick quickly added, “I found out later that most of that network was based on a quid pro quo kind of arrangement. No one [in the Big City community] really had a lot of respect for the product that DCB was putting out.”

The last of the nine respondents to be presented in this phase of the study was Jack, who held an executive leadership position at DC, leading a support function that provided services across the entire university. His was among the first areas to be consolidated between the three schools in the early days of the merger. Jack’s perspective on the organization before and after the merger is also unique among the respondents for he reported through DES (Davis Educational System) after it was formed in 1997 as a kind of holding company for DC, DCB, and GLC. As such, he was not technically affiliated with a particular campus, but worked out of the DES headquarters in Culvertown. Prior to DES he worked for the Culvertown Campus of DC. We met in a conference room on one of the campuses of Davis University. When asked to describe his pre-merger drawing (figure 9), Jack began,

Since I’ve been around for quite awhile (just over 20 years), I understand a lot of the acquisitions that we have had over time. To me, DC was [the] Culvertown [campus] for the most part with those outlying campuses who were all autonomous. They really didn’t talk to each other too much. They, in fact, competed with each other for students. They each were their own almost individual company, so being on this location to me DC is Culvertown and that is what is represented by these orange circles here. As each one was their own entity and there wasn’t a whole lot of collaboration. There wasn’t a whole lot of

communication. There wasn't a lot of 'this is the way we do things at Davis.'

They were left up to their own to do things the way they wanted to. Best practice was never necessarily communicated to the others.

Jack then moved his finger to the portion of the drawing showing DCB and said,

And then we had this *thing* (italics added) they called DCB that we sort of had a relationship with even way, way back and they somehow acquired a name of their own, a separate entity. I mean even more so that the Davis entities were (independent). Very formal culture here (still pointing at DCB), very resentful that Davis was even associated with that and so there was definitely a difficult relationship there between what was DCB at that time and Davis on the other side of the state. From the way he talked, it seemed Jack had some feelings of antagonism toward DCB, also.

I asked how long ago he perceived these hard feelings between DCB and DC, trying to understand the timeframe. Jack replied, "I would say probably more prevalent in the early to mid-90s," but then he quickly added that, "the DCB culture being very formal [had] almost a union mentality amongst many of the workers was prevalent up to three years ago (2002)." There were formally recognized collective-bargaining units for faculty at the Muskego and Coram campuses of DCB, the two largest campuses. The only other recognized unionized, collective bargaining unit was a faculty organization in Culvertown, also the largest campus of DC.

Name _____ Pseudonym Jack Date 9/16/05 Premerger

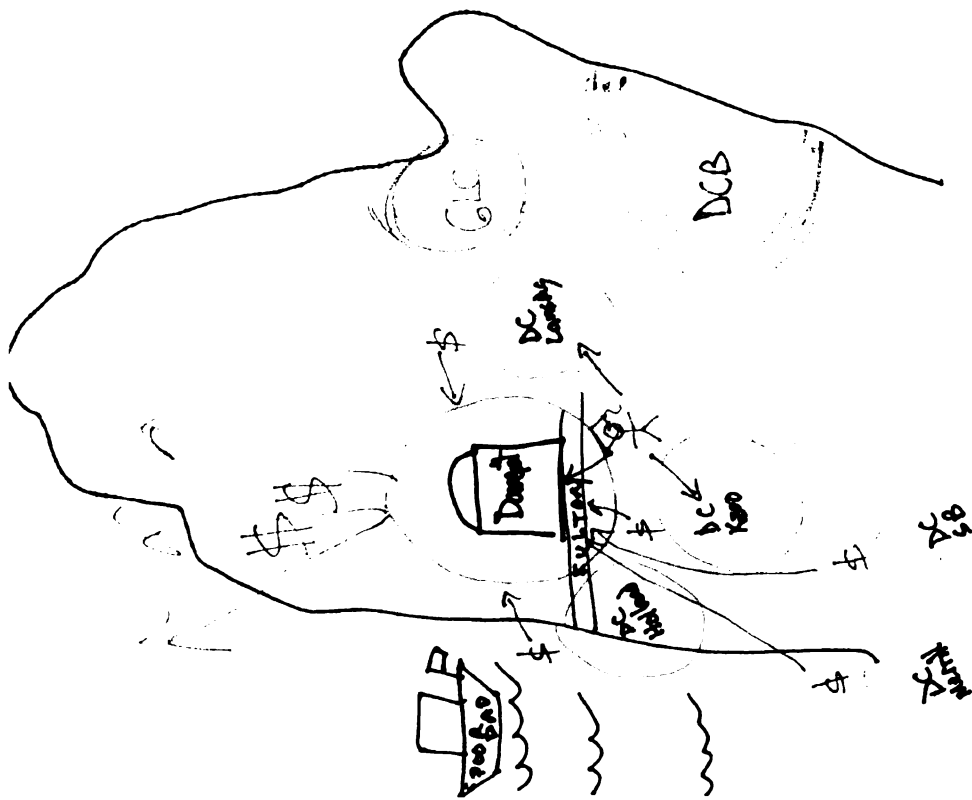


Figure 9 Jack: Pre-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

As in Rick's pre-merger drawing, Jack's drawing featured several dollar signs.

Jack's description of these dollar signs began,

I also felt that the dollar signs here represent dollars going out to who knows where. In other words, there wasn't a lot of reinvestment into the university, whether it be into physical plant, IT, infrastructure, and development of people. It seems that dollars came in, and they may have come in from these outlying regional locations into Culvertown and then they went out. You didn't know really for sure where they went out to. My sense is that they would spend money on things like this boat – Poor Dad and had little parties out there. Not necessarily just for executives, but departments could go out there and use the boat, maybe once a summer. Then there would always be these junkets and thing that would cost quite a bit of money, like buying a suite at the Culvertown Arena or having a suite at the Big City Arena and the exec-types would use them to the extreme in terms of large bills coming in for just one night at Big City Arena. And other things like that – bonuses to them and what not. I don't begrudge certain execs making money. They are the top people and they certainly deserve what they earn. I just feel, under the old regime and old culture there was not a lot of investment into the university, (pause) at that point and time, the college.

Jack returned to the subject of resentment of DCB personnel towards DC and told a story of what he observed in 1995-96 when DCB needed to upgrade their central mainframe computer system. The Clear Water Campus of DC had a mainframe computer called the AS400 to which none of the other DCB campuses were connected. David Schmidt, the long-time executive leader of the Clear Water Campus offered to have DCB

connected to his campus mainframe. Jack recalled, “[Schmidt] said, ‘OK, we want you guys on board.’ It was a decision made by David Schmidt, not the leadership in Culvertown. He could do that and so DCB begrudgingly went along with it. They actually went along kicking and screaming. It was ugly.”

Jack saw the general animosity between DCB and DC spread throughout the campuses saying, “But this culture of, not just [DCB] formality, but this future of resentment toward Davis permeated DCB from the top down to the average admissions recruiter.” He pointed out that the animus held by DCB personnel toward DC was also held by many of the local campuses in the DC system towards the Culvertown campus, although to a lesser extent. He explained,

Let’s say, a North Fork or a Clear Water [person] didn’t have the resentment towards Culvertown that a DCB did. They still didn’t always take kindly to edicts that came from Culvertown. I was always told that when I was on another campus, for whatever the reason, I was just a Davis employee; not a Culvertown employee. I would be perceived differently if I was from Culvertown.

When asked if he perceived the same kind of resentment or hostility from GLC personnel toward DC or, more specifically, the Culvertown Campus of DC, Jack said, “Not so much from GLC as from DCB. Great Lakes were facilitated by the fact that when we took over Glen Lincoln, we moved an individual over there that was from Davis to become President of Glen Lincoln.” After the merger, this President of Glen Lincoln was named Executive Vice President for Operations for Davis University. Jack continued, “With bringing the Davis culture to Glen Lincoln, they were much more open to Culvertown ideas, I guess, than DCB was.”

Campuses Associated with the Pre-Merger Colleges

<u>Davis College</u>	<u>Decatur College of Business</u>	<u>Glen Lincoln College</u>
Culvertown	Coram	Clare City
Clearwater	Muskego	Manorville
North Fork	Sparkstown	Amity
Middleville		Stoystown
Peninsula Point		Port Jefferson

Only those campuses referred to in the text are listed

Table 1

The Pre-Merger Phase – Summary

There appear to be several recurring themes in the data relating to respondents' descriptions of working for the pre-merger organizations. The feeling of family expressed by Redeye, Jordan, Tim, and Mary is one of these. While the idea of family evokes thoughts of cooperation, trust, and mutual support, families also have conflicts. From a staff and middle management perspective, Jordan and Mary indicate that many lower level conflicts were handled in an open and collegial manner at GLC and DC, respectively. However, Madge spoke of conflict situations related to information and practices between different staff departments on her DC campus. This apparent difference needs to be considered, at least in part, through the roles played by these respondents. Both Jordan and Mary had teaching duties in addition to their academic administrative work, leading to overlapping administrator and faculty roles. Madge and Redeye, who had roles as non-teaching staff members, related a negative reaction to the mass terminations.

A relative ease and openness of communication is another commonality found in the comments of Jordan saying that disagreements were handled promptly and openly and of Mary who related that the atmosphere was open and fun. Redeye felt free enough to decline telling others that their jobs had been eliminated without fear of sanctions towards himself. Conversely, Betty relates a situation on her campus of DC where communication between the Registrar's and the Admissions offices is strained by Admissions personnel demanding a one-way acquiescence to their needs. Betty's perception is that the campus leadership of the campus sided with Admissions, thereby limiting her ability to communicate on the appropriateness of some actions taken by Admissions. Overall, participants seem to indicate a fairly open communication process at all three of the pre-merger schools, more so at DC and GLC than those at DCB

Perhaps the most sharply drawn similarity among the merger partners is attention to a profitable bottom-line. The common euphemism for making money is enrollment, for in all three of these a private colleges, tuition from enrolled students comprises the vast majority of revenue. Madge and Betty from DC commented on the pressure for admissions recruiters to meet goals and for other personnel to facilitate that effort was intense. From DCB, Rick clearly believed that the prime issue was to get people enrolled, regardless of their academic preparedness. Rick put it very succulently when asked about the primary organizational value DCB, saying, "Cash!" From GLC, Jordan spoke of a common dissatisfaction with salary, which reflects the other side of the bottom-line formula – control of expenditures. Rick echoed this when commenting on the under funding of infrastructure by DC. Jack's drawing displayed prominent images of financial distribution between the premerger schools towards DES.

A point of departure in the way the three pre-merger schools operated was how participants perceived the level of formality used in conducting business. Bobbi made a point of saying that GLC was a somewhat formal organization, as indicated by the unwritten dress code, which was indirectly, but effectively enforced. Both GLC and DCB maintained more formal business professional appearance for both men and women, while faculty and staff at DC wore more casual attire. Similarly, Jack stressed his perception of how formal DCB was in comparison to DC. The titles “doctor” and “professor” were routinely used by GLC and DCB personnel in meetings, both while conducting business and during breaks. That was a sharp contrast to DC where familiarity on a first name basis was the norm, even between the building custodian and the college president.

There appears to be a co-mingling of trust and distrust within elements of the pre-merger organizations. On one hand, there is familial-type trust expressed by Redeye, Jordan, Tim, and Mary where members are permitted to communicate freely about the specifics of curricula, quality, and efficiency. In return, these members derive some stability and reward from the familial caring of the organizations. On the other hand, Rick describes some level of distrust between organizational leadership and faculty as noted by the presence of unionized campuses. [At DCB there was unionized faculty on two campuses and on one campus of DC]. In addition, Rick and Jack perceived a significant amount of distrust by DCB personnel towards those at DC. Leadership distrust is also evident by the DES creation of programs or formats of curriculum delivery that bypass existing faculty mechanisms for governance and workload fulfillment. Another element of leadership distrust in staff is displayed by the lack of any rationale for the merger

itself. There is no identifiable documentation from DES that detailed the elements driving the decision to merge.

The Post-Merger Phase: Merger Related Documents of the Organization

Since one of this study's purposes is exploring the influences of organizational culture for mergers in higher education it is necessary to look at statements made by DU that illustrate the espoused values of the organization. For example, there seems not to be some type of written or verbal rationale for undertaking the merger in the first place. In the institutional history portion of the Higher Learning Commission Self-Study, completed in December of 2003, there is no mention of why the merger was taking place. The only reference was a statement in the introduction indicating the three schools of DES began operation as DU in May 2000 (Anonymous, 2003).

Coinciding with the merger of GLC, DCB, and DC was the retirement of Donald Jones, Chancellor of DES starting in 1998 and the President of Davis College from 1977-98, for health reasons. The first president of a merged DU, Gregory (Greg) Deemer, was announced on September 14, 2000. Previously, Deemer served as chief executive officer of a graduate medical education center and several managed health care organizations in his career (Granderson, 2000).

In 2001, the mission and vision of DU was formulated. It was (and still is):

Mission

Davis University prepares individuals and organizations to excel in the knowledge-driven environment of the 21st century.

Vision

Davis University aspires to be a world-class business school, excelling in career preparation, career advancement and professional development. With its distinguished reputation for mentoring and practical learning, Davis will teach students to think creatively and recognize opportunity in a dynamic economy. The University will also instill in students an appreciation for civic responsibility in the communities where they live and work (Anonymous, 2001b).

The mission and vision statements, in draft form, were distributed to the various campuses of the DU system for comment prior to their official adoption. Accompanying the mission/vision statement was a set of statements called the Guiding Principles (Anonymous, 2001b).

Guiding Principles

Learning is our highest purpose and first priority. Davis University fosters an environment that promotes shared learning for its students, faculty, and all stakeholders.

Quality is the focus of all activity: Davis University is committed to high standards meant to sustain and advance excellence in higher learning.

Integrity is the foundation of all behaviors: Davis University considers fairness, respect, and honesty as the benchmarks for policies, practices and its relationships with others.

Entrepreneurial Spirit drives action and innovation. Davis University encourages its members to incorporate new knowledge, technology, and learning approaches into the educational process.

Diversity enhances a strong and healthy organizational culture. Davis University

values the contributions of diverse populations, ideologies, and educational perspectives.

Service is essential to a balanced life. Davis University seeks to instill a sense of civic responsibility as a fundamental part of working and living in a community.

Accountability drives results. Davis University holds all employees accountable for their actions and expects them to strive to improve themselves while working to continuously improve the university.

The mission, vision, and guiding principles were printed on wallet sized, laminated cards and distributed to all Davis employees in the fall of 2001, just prior to the convocation event. At the same time, plastic name badges with the new logo for DU were distributed. The name badges purposely carried no reference to the person's pre-merger school, nor did they carry any information as to title, position, or academic degree attained; just the name. The leadership of each campus was told by executive leadership to make clear that everyone was to wear their name badge during work hours whereas before the merger, name badges were most commonly used for attending off-campus activities.

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement of what DU would be, how it will operate, and what the aspirations are of this merged institution is the Framework for Success (see Appendix D). This 11 page document was distributed to the DU community on November 16, 2001 during the first university-wide convocation ceremony.

Convocation was an event held only by DC prior to the merger and the only comprehensive ritual from one of the pre-merger organizations to become incorporated into DU. During convocation, all faculty and staff of the school gather at the start of the

school year to learn of new university initiatives, programs, and to honor the accomplishments of faculty and staff over the past year.

The Framework for Success was presented at convocation as the template for what the university would be and as a guide to how it would actually merge operations. As such, it requires some examination to bring out salient operational and cultural information that pertains to this study. The introductory paragraph sets forth the goals for Davis University.

The Uniqueness of Davis University

Learning is our highest purpose and first priority. To that end, we will deliver innovative academic programs that offer students a truly practical business education. Davis University is in the business of education and as such will place quality education at the core of our goals and strategies. We will be responsive to a changing business environment and will prepare students for the world of work, getting them where they want to be quicker than other higher education institutions.

The Framework for Success emphasized a business focus for DU. Each of the pre-merger institutions had programs in computer information science, paralegal, and allied health, which are not traditionally thought of as business programs. Marketing and enrollment of these non-business programs continued, but the Framework for Success document was not modified to reflect the larger variety of program offerings.

The Framework then outlines a set of characteristics that will be used as a yardstick to assess the accomplishment of organizational goals. These characteristics include:

1. Quality programs
2. Flexibility and efficiency
3. Student services
4. Partnerships with business
5. Committed, thoughtful employees
6. Long-term commitment to the vision

While the specifics of these items can be seen in Appendix D, what is notable about the Framework for Success is this is the first time where the term *culture*, in an organizational sense, is used in the merger process. The Guiding Principles, formulated in the same time period also uses the term culture, but this is in reference to cultural diversity, with its racial, ethnic, and gender overtones. The fifth item contained in the Framework for Success states, “[To] Recruit, reward, and retain employees dedicated to a *culture* (italics mine) of customer service, innovation, and personal accountability. We will create a culture in which Davis University employees will be encouraged to share good ideas and best practices; this is essential to excellence (Anonymous, 2001a).”

The Framework for Success then details a number of subcategories for academics, customer service, organizational development/excellence, campus operation, recruitment/retention, marketing, advancement, finances, and facilities. Under each subcategory there are several bullet points that explain what will be done, how it will be accomplished, and what will be indicators used to monitor the progress. The subcategory of organizational development and excellence demands further exploration here for it directly deals with organizational culture. In its entirety the section on organizational development says:

Organizational Development and Excellence

Davis University will create and maintain an exciting culture that is open and creative, and where people have the skills and resources to excel in their work.

Faculty and staff will be encouraged to help improve the University. The Davis culture will be founded upon integrity in all behaviors, exemplary customer service, the embracing of change, and an abiding commitment to the quality of education.

- There will be a university program that will promote and enhance dialogue on ideas. Regular and open communication will be a hallmark of Davis University. Faculty and staff will be encouraged to help improve the University. Processes will be put into place to bring leadership and employees together regularly to share ideas and provide critical feedback on improving the University.
- The University will commit resources to employee education, ongoing training in customer service, and team building.
- We will be committed to excellence in every facet of operation. Davis will be the best in its markets and practices, or it will exit those markets and change operating procedures respectively.
- Employees will be held accountable for performance and rewarded based upon a merit system that will recognize risk taking, innovation, creative thinking, decisiveness, customer service, teamwork, and personal initiative.
- The University will develop systems to promote people into progressively higher positions. Roles and responsibilities will be assessed regularly to assure

appropriate progress toward the highest quality education and exemplary customer service. (Anonymous, 2001a, pp. 5-6).

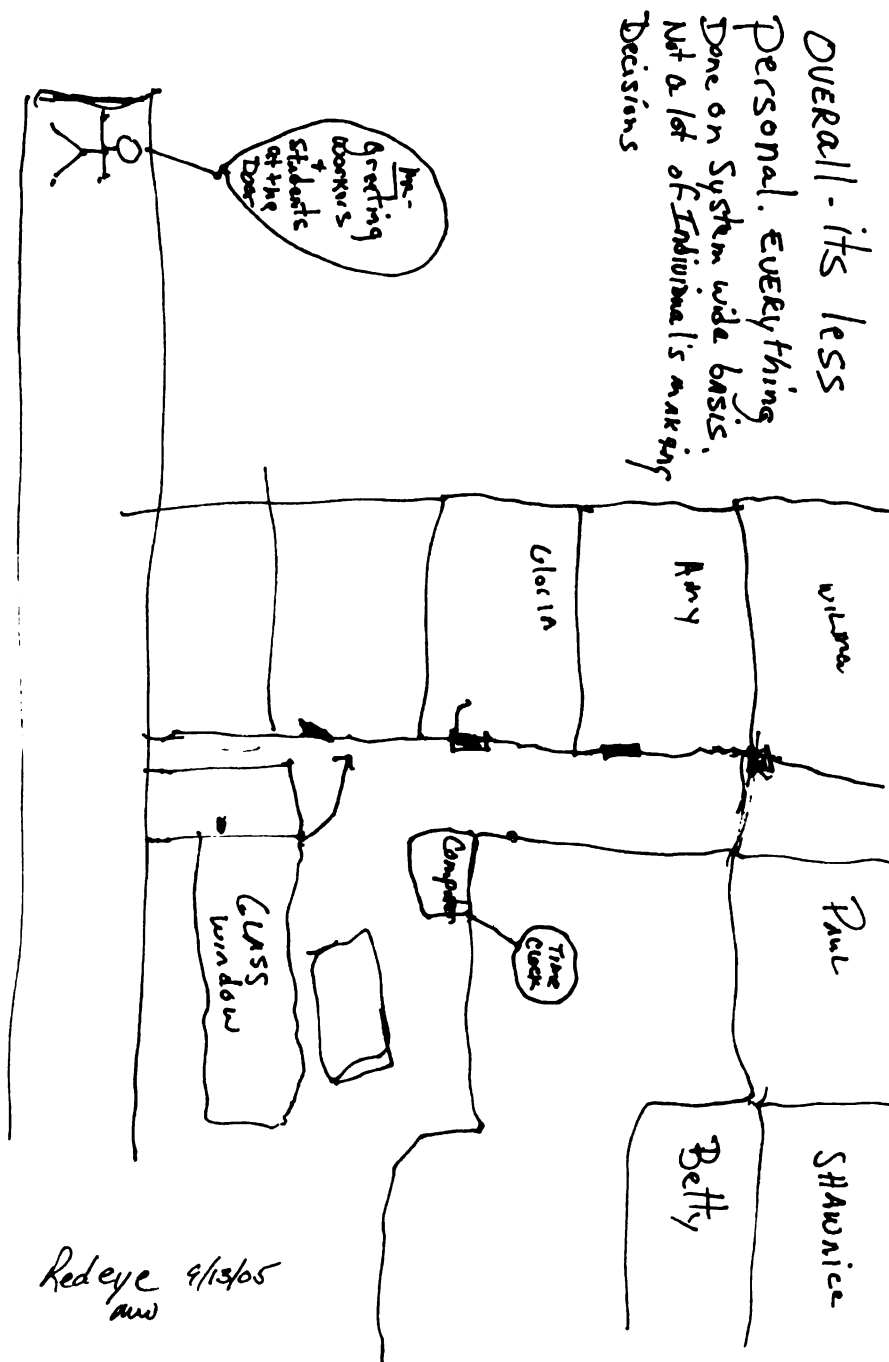
The other reference to culture occurs in the customer service subcategory, which says, “The customer service culture will permeate every campus and level of the University.”

These DU documents from early in the merger process provide a comprehensive strategic direction, complimented with attitudinal modes of operation that delineate how the goals of the university will be attained. The lack of specifics on exactly how these goals were to be reached was not a large concern at that time for participants because it seemed understandable that specifics would be forthcoming.

The Post-Merger Phase – Participant Descriptions of Drawings

Redeye started the description of his post-merger drawing (Figure 10) by pointing to himself in the lower left hand corner greeting people at the door. He described how, before the merger, he would arrive at about 7:30 a.m. each morning and find one of the secretaries and the maintenance person already there. After the merger a time clock was installed and staff was supposed to start at 8:00am. All of these people were now expected to “punch-in.” Redeye accepted this new manner of managerial time monitoring saying,

I didn’t take it personally. I knew why they did it... I realize that being a supervisor the workers don’t always do what they are supposed to do or whatever and if it became a problem then that is one way of you knowing whether people are showing up.



First CAMPUS - Trenton University

Figure 10. Redeye: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

When asked how many people on campus had to use the time-clock, he said, "Pretty much just about everyone other than some of what I would call the executive position people." Redeye added,

I don't recall if faculty clocked in, I don't think they clocked in. I could be mistaken but, I don't really recall anyone really complaining about it. I just had, personally I just thought, well... if you don't trust your people then something is wrong here.

Redeye also described how, before the merger, he performed many tasks outside the confines of his staff level job description. He had the expertise to perform these extra duties and was consulted by both local campus and executive levels of leadership because of his knowledge and experience. After the merger, Redeye was called upon less and less to perform these tasks and approximately a year after the merger, stated he was performing solely within the specifications of his job description. The other area in which Redeye felt he lost empowerment was having input into hiring people reporting to him. Prior to the merger, he had 13 people reporting to him and was an integral part of their hiring process. After the merger, Redeye stated he was not consulted about hiring the people reporting to him. He was also not a part of the process when it came to retrenchment or reductions in the staffing of his area. Lay-offs or failure to rehire those who left through normal attrition whittled down the number from the pre-merger contingent to one other part-time person by the time of the interview.

Thinking about the attitude of those who survived the cut-backs, Redeye did not see much change:

Well not really. I think the ones that remained were, I think, happy that they are still there and took advantage of their opportunity and survived that was by doing... by jumping on board and doing whatever it took to get the job done. When you have less people doing the same job you got to step up and do what you got to do a little bit.

From Redeye's perspective, the merger went fairly well. He thought some of the staff was in a state of shock at first, but after the executive leadership presented the specifics of the transition plan, he could see that the institutional direction was good. Redeye also thought the executive leadership did a good job of communicating the plans to staff. The group vice president for the region and the provost frequently held meetings in the region to keep people informed. Redeye was not always included in those meetings, but he knew they took place.

Redeye related that a family-like atmosphere was slowly returning to the Sparkstown campus in part because, "There's hardly anyone left working here." He explained it meant those still at Sparkstown have bonded through the act of surviving previous retrenchment episodes. Redeye also felt the reemergence of a familial climate was also due to a January 2005 social outing sponsored by the executive vice president responsible for this region. All personnel working at the Sparkstown, Manorville, and Clare City campuses were included. None of the other participants reported having a purely social event conducted on their campus during the merger process.

Tim's description of his post-merger drawing (Figure 11) was a little surprising for he said, "The bottom line." Tim's drawing looked like a group of somewhat disconnected and faceless stick people, one of which had a question mark. The only face

that appears is decidedly unhappy. Like his description of customer service as a prime value of DCB, Tim continued with that subject by saying,

I think there is not a concern about the ultimate satisfaction of the customer and I think this is reflected in the downturn in enrollment. It is reflected in the frustration level of the students and it is reflected in the frustration level of the people who are on the line, because we are the ones that give the satisfaction in the students... We can't change the structure. We don't have the resources to assist them because we don't know what it is, the tweet that we're doing.

Tension and frustration were quite evident in Tim's voice,

So there's a big question mark here (referring to the drawing) and that's everybody looking on saying 'Okay, do you know what this is and this is, the current situation?' Then the sadness (again referring to the drawing) is the frustration level of the people on the front line of not having all the information that we need. There's a big communication gap where some of those things that the people who are on the front line need the information in order to do our job.

They'd say there it would be an academic change, so the academic change has not been filtered down to those of us in which that information would be valuable.

In expanding on his perceived inability to obtain information pertaining to his immediate job duties, Tim related one cause to be, "I have someone who I call my guru, my little private guru. And when that person is on vacation I panic because that is the person that I call. Now at one time DCB had 20 gurus. Now I have one." Tim further explained that

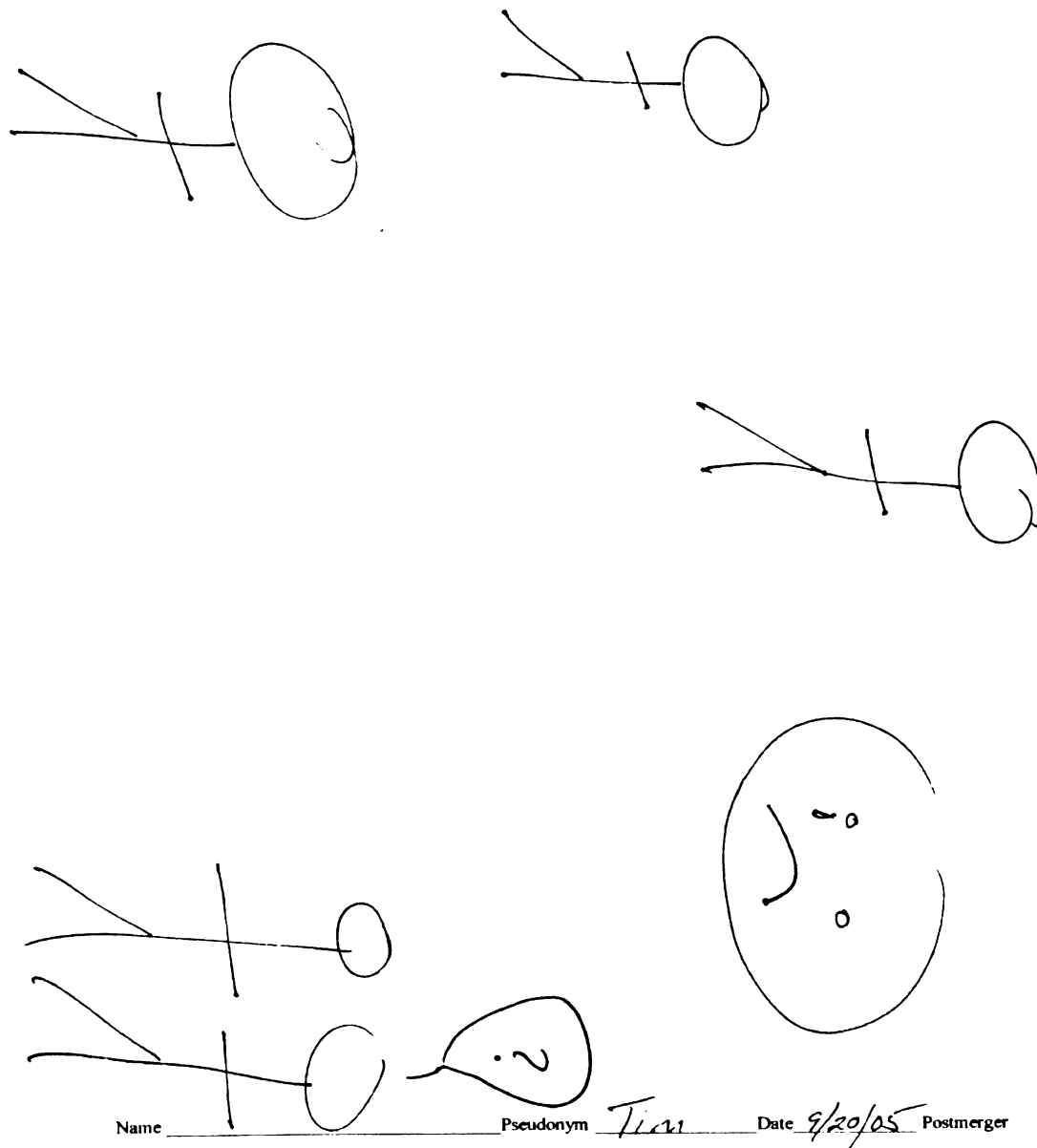


Figure 11. Tim: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

the loss of what he characterized as good workers, dedicated to excellent customer service also led to a grieving process. That grief connects with the tear on the face in the drawing and the faceless stick people represent all those who are no longer with the organization.

Tim seemed to think that there was a pre-judgment that personnel from DCB were against change.

I don't feel that people are opposed to change. I'm not opposed to change. I think there is this stigma that because you were DCB you can't change. So, I think the frustration is, not so much that we're not willing to change, it's if you have a vision, that's good. But take into account a plan of actions where the student doesn't lose. If you can do that transition without the student losing and the customer service and the quality being diminished, then that's successful. I think the DCB people feel that they're being discriminated against because you can't learn anything new.

Tim implied that personnel associated with DCB were directed to do things that they felt compromised the quality of customer service for students. As employees committed to the level of customer service earlier accepted by DCB, they questioned or pointed out when directives lessened the quality of customer service. In doing so, the perception of those in leadership was that people identifying with the pre-merger DCB were obstructing a new and clearly better way of doing things, instead of collaborating to affect the new goals of the merged university.

To illustrate the decline in customer service, Tim related the story of how co-operative programs proceeded soon after the merger. The curriculum was still very much

a DCB one as the curricula unification of the three schools did not occur until the fall of 2003. Tim worked collaboratively with local employers to help design positions for which graduates of the school might be hired. Tim described it as quite rewarding work, both extrinsically for assisting graduates obtain employment and intrinsically for himself. This position was then allocated to a supervisor whose department was being eliminated. Tim was transferred to coordinate the co-operative education effort. The co-operative education program allowed students to work with a local employer in an area relating to their major while still attending classes at school.

Within a year, Tim grew the program from just over 10 co-op sites to 46 functioning sites. Tim enjoyed seeing the growth in the students saying,

...because I realized that there's an awesome experience for students. That this was very very important for the student, given it was a very good economy, I mean, it was a very good experience for the students, and we had a coop luncheon, invited their bosses, and such. So I did such a great job. They changed the curriculum; the coop was taken out of my hands.

Tim recounted that, conceptually, the change made a certain amount of sense for it provided greater continuity of learning from the classroom to the workplace. However, the transfer implementation was not well thought out or executed. The faculty was busy already with curriculum changes and the logistics of converting from a 10-week quarter system to a 15 week semester system of classes. The relatively small numbers of full-time faculty were increasingly used to provide administrative oversight and manage the large number of adjunct faculty who provided the vast majority of classroom teaching.

The faculty members were not provided support or information necessary to effectively carry out the management of numerous co-op relationships. As Tim related it,

When the semester started, [the] management coordinator came in, and he found this student, and he said the student had decided to co-op. And I said, well, I don't know how to tell you this, but I don't do co-op anymore. And he said, well, who does? And I said, you do. He goes, WHAT? (emphasis Tim) They had hired all new faculty and not told him that that was part of his job responsibility.

Tim still had students coming to him to help straighten out problems occurring in the co-ops. He was told flatly by his supervisor that co-ops were not his job anymore. Angry and frustrated students, whose needs were now not being met by the school, carried those feelings back to the sponsoring employers. The co-op program quickly started to unravel. One company typically hired co-op participants full-time after the students completed their three month experience. Tim said, "that company no longer participates in the co-op program at DU. There was no support from the school...Ask me how many co-ops we have now? Maybe two."

Bobbi described her post-merger drawing (figure 12) by pointing to herself and saying, "This is where I am right here. See I'm a little bigger. I've got bigger hair. With the people under me I became a coordinator and manager of people as well as a manager of my instructional duties." Bobbi presently supervises 21 adjunct faculty and teaches four courses per semester on three campuses. She is the only full-time faculty member/department coordinator in her discipline for four campuses of what was GLC. In addition to covering academic administration on several campuses, Bobbi seemed confused about reporting lines, including her own and relayed that her reporting



Name _____ Pseudonym Bobbi Date 9/1/05 Postmerger

Figure 12. Bobbi: Post Merger (drawn by interview participant)

structure had become three-way. Bobbi reported to the executive director who had operational control of the campus, the campus academic dean who dealt with student

issues and local faculty scheduling, and the school academic deans who had charge of curriculum matters in the broad discipline areas of general education, information technology, business, allied health, and the graduate school. In describing who she turned to and for what, Bobbi said,

There are not usually more than 2 people that I would be involved with at a time.

Now, I honestly don't find that a problem unless we are not getting any answers.

If I have a really big problem, it goes to 2 or 3 people. I will send it to all three people.

When asked how she knew who to inform or talk with on any particular issue, Bobbi said, "I think we all figured out there are other people who need to know. I don't know if I'm doing it the right way or not. I've never been rebuked."

The initial stress that Madge placed on describing her post-merger drawing was uniformity (Figure 13). "I look at them as merging into one large unified organization that has a management system that has just pulled all the campuses together with one theme from start to finish," she said. Madge went on to add, "So if a student takes an English class here (Culvertown) they are going to take the exact same English class in Coram, Middleville, or Peninsula Point."

When asked how she knew who to inform or talk with on any particular issue, Bobbi said, "I think we all figured out there are other people who need to know. I don't know if I'm doing it the right way or not. I've never been rebuked."

I asked how the impact of the merger and unification affected her on a personal basis. Madge said,

Well I think that it's been a very positive change and that the competition and competitiveness have disappeared. Having the university looked at from the marketing standpoint and from the unification as now one big school. Now looking at this Culvertown branch as their main hub, this is the focus hub now that the other campuses are campus locations to serve the students that it really gives a unique focus and once again removes a lot of barriers for the other campuses.

When asked if it was her perception that members of other campuses resented this new role for Culvertown, she said,

No. What's fairly nice is that the other campuses all look at us as the parent campus now and they seem really comfortable calling us and asking questions and whether it's with financial aid questions, whether it's with academic questions, there's just a real nice overlap.

There was something about Madge's body language and facial expressions that gave me the impression she was getting uncomfortable with this aspect of the conversation. It seemed that while Madge acknowledged that Culvertown was the main campus, it was not something that she expected to discuss in a personal way. It was as though she realized that this was not the kind of interview she thought it was going to be, essentially admitting as much at the conclusion of the interview: "When we began talking about the relationships in management and style I was wondering why you deviated some

of the questions away from like a merger and joining. Almost why it became so personal?"

I sensed that Madge was hesitant to talk about personal reactions to the merger, so I put off exploring those issues until later. That opening occurred in a short time when we discussed the restructuring changes Madge saw in her department and in the other departments with which she worked. As Madge described it,

We were all handed a packet that with the packet was our new job description, how much you would be making, what our hours would be, and what our job title would be. That was on a Friday afternoon. We had to sign the job description and turn it in on Monday and if we did not that would be a letter of resignation. So the position then became this job and that to keep my job I had to accept.

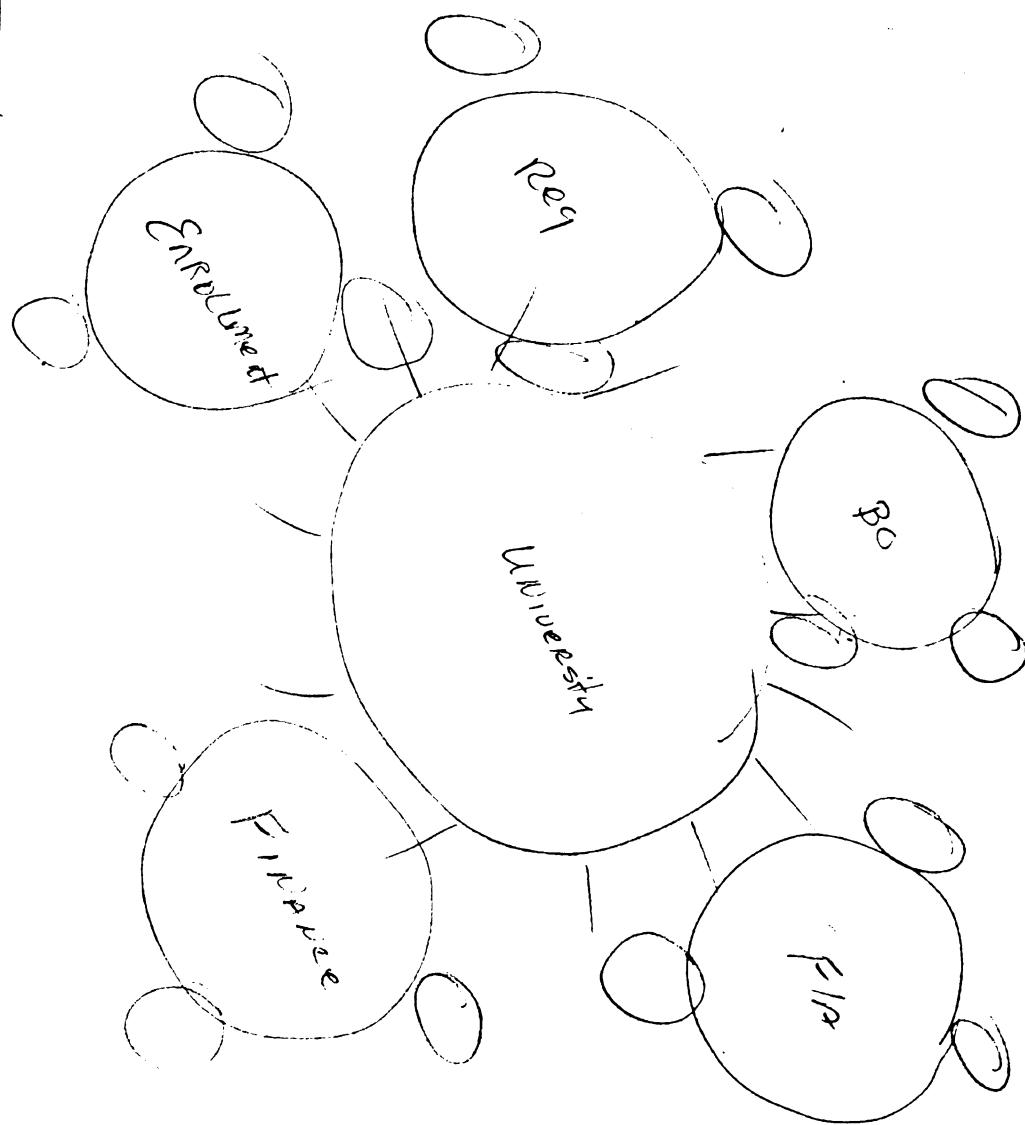
I asked Madge how she felt about this process. She said, "First thought was a horrendous sense of loss because of all the people that got fired that day." Madge's new responsibilities involved working with financial aid accounts, an area with which she had little preparation, including how to use a 10 ten-key adding machine. No training was provided by DU in this job skill, despite Madge asking for it several times. She also mentioned that there were many new people hired into her area within a short period of time after the department was restructured. These new people tended to be younger and less experienced than the rest of those who were retained.

When asked how she changed during the merger process, Madge said, "You have to be very... it's a place where you have to be very politically correct. So there is a framework that you have to be in this environment that is expected."

Betty described her post-merger drawing (figure 14) with the university in the center, similar to Madge's description. There was one system and one way of doing things. "It is a university," Betty said. "I'm reaching to satellites out there spinning around own little worlds. Within each little world there are other satellites spinning around those." Betty related this to the idea that although it was now one university, there are still operational areas, as represented in the drawing, which want to do things in a certain way or dislike having a common method of operation imposed on them by the system. Dissenters representing these areas, Betty said, were the ones that were let go during the merger transition.

When you have all these different people leave and then have to turn around and hire their positions to fill again, you know there had to be something there. These people were cut loose because they didn't want to be on the team. We've lost a great deal of knowledge and experience. Many, many years of knowledge and experience. Now why would they get rid of that person if it wasn't for money? You know, a person is on board, as you say, they are doing their job. Why all of a sudden are they gone now? I knew they were on board because I deal with this before. I mean the morale in this whole deal is been really bad. You work your butt off and think you're doing, you're on board and you know.

Betty told of a time when she spoke up at one of a series of town hall-like campus meetings conducted by President Deemer, which started in the 2004-05 school year in response to perennially low employee survey ratings for organizational communication. She asked of the president, "Do you know what kind of morale you have in this place? In any of your places?" referring to those still on staff who saw many good, committed



Betty 9/14/05
AW post

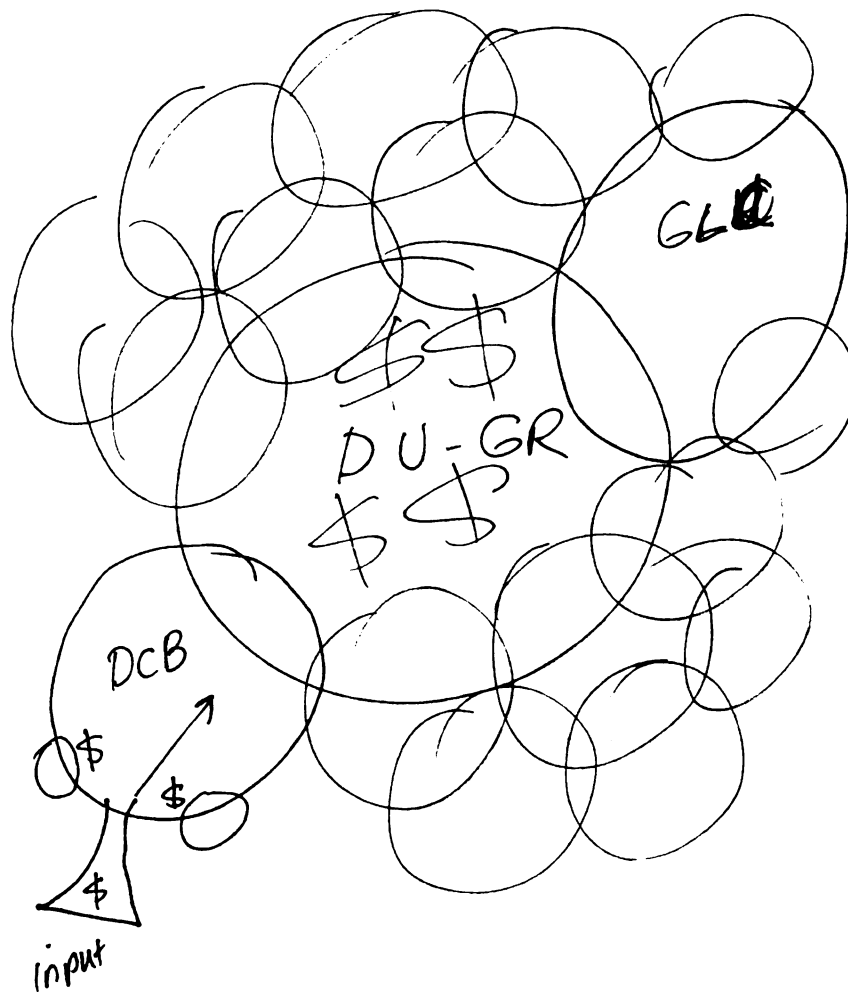
Figure 14. Betty: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

employees dismissed. She also described telephone conversations with remaining employees who expressed how scared they were that their position would be the next to go. Betty remembered President Deemer saying, “They started to do a little more advanced notice when people were leaving” and that he thanked her for speaking up at the meeting. Betty went on to say that she was not encountering as many scared, crying people now as she had a year earlier, and was hearing more laughter. Then she added, laughing, “But who have they got left to fire?”

The domination of Culvertown as the main campus continued as the theme with Rick’s post-merger drawing (figure 15). The way he explained the drawing was, Well, both DCB and GLC have been overshadowed significantly by the Culvertown campus, even though DCB (in Coram) was the largest campus in the system up until this year, always the largest campus. After the merger Culvertown became the main campus. That was one of the things the people in DCB feared because they had been the main campus. Yes, a lot of resentment. They feel like the red-headed stepchild with a new step-parent.

Rick said he believed in the need for one university, one way of doing things, and one culture. He attributed much of the resentment in the former DCB to the fact that Culvertown was now the central decision-making authority. The power was no longer centered in a former DCB campus like Coram or Muskego. As Rick put it, “It’s about power. That’s what it is about. It’s about power.”

Rick was also outspoken when talking about how he felt this evolution of the Culvertown Lannon Campus to become the main campus was carried out. He said



Name _____ Pseudonym Rick Date 9/18/05 Postmerger

Figure 15. Rick: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

executive leadership performed the transition, “sloppily.” Rick expanded on what **he** meant,

Well, there was unnecessary drama, derision, and division because of the way it was handled. First of all, it is my personal opinion that Greg (President Deemer) wasn’t prepared for the job and he’s been learning on the job. Unfortunately, there are casualties when you have a chief-executive that learns on the job. The things that will see him successful are also the things that get in the way of developing relationships and trust. I think that if he had been more skilled in the beginning it would have been less traumatic. But as it was, they (executive leadership) were feeling their way along. (Greg’s) trying to hold on to his job, people are pissed off, the board is asking questions, it (the merger) cost more than they expected. They told the board it would cost so much for the transition and it was like 10 times that. I don’t know if the board even knows that now, but that’s the word on the street. So there’s some faux pas’ along the way and heads are going to roll. Greg’s wasn’t. Matt went [referring to COO Matt Penning’s departure in February 2004]. Yes, scapegoats. I think he was sufficiently insecure in the beginning. He didn’t surround himself with tough talent because it was too threatening, that’s my opinion.

Rick went on to say that Greg is learning. “He wasn’t [open to learning] until **recently**. He never was in the beginning. He was too insecure, but now I think he is more **open** about it.” Rick mentioned the effort to improve communication with “town-hall” **style** meetings begun in the 04/05 school year. In addition, Rick indicated the president

was starting culture transformation workshops for executive and some mid-level **managers** in the fall of 2005.

Jack's post-merger drawing was, like his pre-merger illustration, more global and **depicted** the overall system (figure 16). He described it as,

This culture thing where we have these autonomous units that kind of have their own culture now, I'm trying to depict here that there is a more of a current culture and a common vision of where Davis University is going now, shared by all the campuses. There is still a line around Coram because there is still an isolated pocket there that hasn't quite conformed, but we're getting there.

Jack attributed much of the turmoil of the merger was not as much to movement **from** a pre-merger state of things to a post-merger state, but more to the leadership **personalities** pre-merger that essentially were replaced by an entirely new set of people **after** the merger. It took away from the greater sense of family that was present before. **The** focus was more local campus oriented, but the size of the new organization also **diminished** the family-like atmosphere. "I definitely don't feel quite the sense of loyalty **throughout** the organization that I did when it was smaller and it was just [former **Chancellor**] Jones in Culvertown," he said. Jack commented further on the process of **how** the merger transition proceeded.

I would recommend that we should try to figure out a way to get that [sense of family] because for a lot of the time it was a difficult merger from the standpoint of restructuring and jobs being eliminated and what not. There was a lot of fear, maybe there still is, for the employees at all the campuses, for their jobs and probably rightly so. They didn't know what was happening. I think

Name _____ Pseudonym Jack Date 9/16/05 Postmerger _____

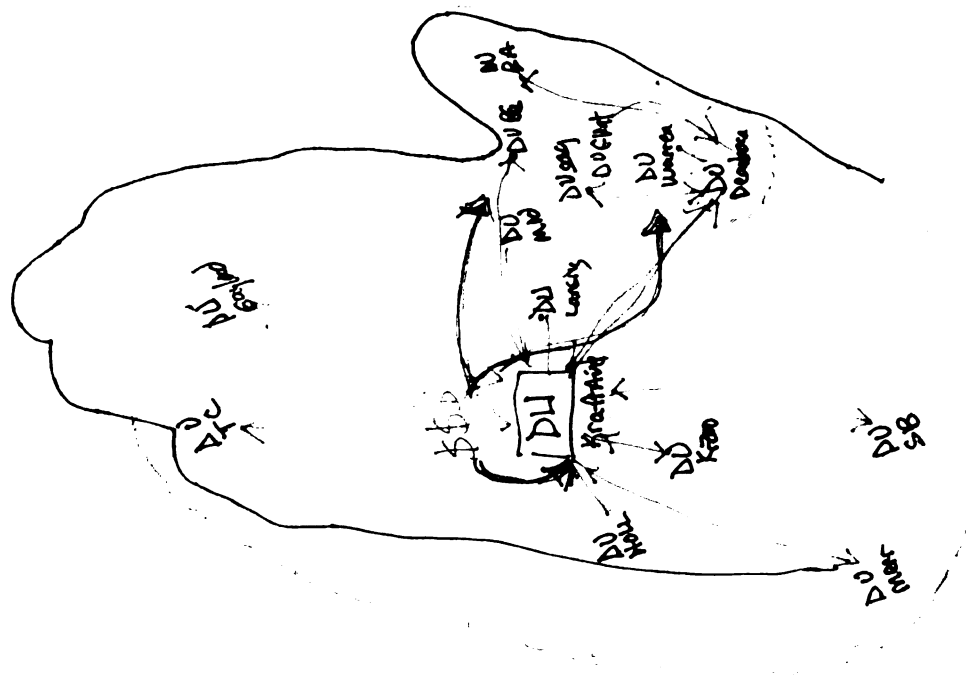


Figure 16. Jack: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

communication of the process could have been better. They could have articulated the vision of what Davis was going to be better earlier and I think today it is pretty solid. If they don't know [now] what the vision is and what the direction of the university is, then they've been asleep. Also, I think the restructure or realignments, or whatever you want to call them were pretty well done. I think people now could be starting to feel more comfortable in where they are at Davis, but during a four to five year period it was very difficult. There was a lot of fear and anxiety among the staff.

Jack believed that the job eliminations that occurred in his area were due to the **i**mplementation of what he called the effective staffing model. The model had certain **m**etrics that had to be met in order to justify staff FTE's. Early in the merger transition, **J**ack's area was combined from the three schools and judged to be running in a lean **f**ashion. In the past couple of years (2004/2005) the use of the effective staffing model **m**eaned that there were several positions eliminated in his area. One was a person with 33 **y**ears service and with whom Jack worked for many years. Jack did not believe that the **r**ecent reductions in staffing had to do with the bottom line or with personalities, but **b**ecause of the model's use. However, when it came to how he was personally and **e**motionally supported in performing those job eliminations, Jack said, "That was very **d**ifficult to have to go through something like that and not get really any help from **w**hether it be my boss or HR or whatever, to help me through that."

Jordan's depiction of working at DU after the merger (Figure 17) contrasted **s**harply with the happy togetherness portrayed in his pre-merger drawing. Jordan's **e**xplanation was,



Figure 17. Jordan: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

This is a cloud up here. This is somebody putting out rules, they are dictating. No connection, if you will, as what is happening on the ground. I see that today. You see that they are writing out a rule here and then this person is behind closed doors, a lot of secrecy going on, a lot of private agendas and this person is not really happy, necessarily, with the rule that has been made, but this person felt responsible to take that to the people that report under this person. You have one person here that is just basically keeping to him or herself at the computer and then you have some people – and that is where a lot of the communication, even though it's been a problem all the way through the unification, it is now worse than it ever was. Most of the communication is done by the grapevine. So that is how I see the culture now. A lot of private agendas and not necessarily being communicated and none of these people are overly happy.

To explain further, Jordan related an incident that occurred a few months earlier **in** the summer of 2005. The discipline in which Jordan taught and had administrative **duties** is subject to external accreditation, which is absolutely essential to the **employability** and career development of its graduates. In an effort to decrease program **costs**, executive leadership made decisions affecting the curriculum content and how it **was** taught. Jordan, mid-level managers, and faculty in the discipline tried to **communicate** that the changes needed to be approved by the accrediting agency and it **was** likely, given past precedents, that the agency would not approve the changes. The **message** from leadership on two occasions was, as Jordan put it, “Shut-up and just do **your** job.” The changes were made. Jordan characterized the leadership’s attitude as, “We **can** do this and it is our decision.” About six weeks later, just before the semester began,

the accrediting agency disapproved the changes forcing last minute revisions to syllabi and schedules that resulted in errors in carrying out this intricate curriculum.

Deception and secrecy were also subjects Jordan raised in our conversation. For example, Jordan told of faculty in his discipline hired on other campuses of DU for salaries that were substantially greater than faculty with ten years longevity. The news of salary differences got out causing great concern for Jordan and his colleagues, who voiced several protests. Leadership promised to address the salary discrepancy. At the time of Jordan's interview, approximately six months had passed since college leaders said they would address the issue. No salary changes for Jordan or his faculty colleagues had been enacted. Jordan said the leadership's actions in this situation conveyed, "A total disconnect as far as I'm concerned up there. A total disconnect!"

In talking more about whether he thought this apparent problem in organizational communication was a result of the system in place or leadership, Jordan said,

I don't think it is the system. I have looked at organizational culture since this is an area I teach. I think it starts at the very top and it is definitely the first layer. If anything, I think it's going to get worse for some time now. Until that leadership is gone and can bring in a much more receptive leadership.

Jordan then told a story of what happened to someone who spoke up at a recent town-hall meeting to express concern about open positions that were advertised outside of the university, without a posting period for internal candidates to allow for early consideration. Jordan said, "He was walked out the next week and he is no longer with us," and concluded, saying,

So the message out there is, 'don't speak up because you will be gone.' Everyone is fearful. Everyone appears to be sitting real close to their computer, (referring to his post-merger drawing) minding their own business and all the talk is going on behind everybody's back.

The topic of Mary's post-merger drawing was the feeling of DU as a place where **the** major emphasis is on taking care with what you say (figure 18). As Mary described it,

At this point, it has become a very bureaucratic, very hierarchically structured organization, very much chain of command. If you run into the President you better not talk about anything more exciting than the football or basketball scores. You definitely do not want to talk about anything that should go through the chain of command, as it were. No substantive issues. You definitely do not want to call the emperor naked.

Mary provided an example of such a situation when she was part of a pilot team to **i**ncorporate simulations into various classes. Discussions within the team disclosed that **t**here were many unanswered questions about using simulations. Mary asked those **q**uestions and was later informed by her academic dean that the vice president for **a**cademics did not like such questions to be asked.

Mary was very specific about when the change from the pre-merger world of DC **b**ecame the post-merger world of DU. "It was Friday December 20, 2002 that the change **s**tarted." The reason Mary knew the date so well turned out to be,

Because that was the blue folder day. That's the day that everyone [faculty on her campus] was marched into a room at the same time on the same day and [it] was explained that faculty were given their blue folder and said 'you either take on

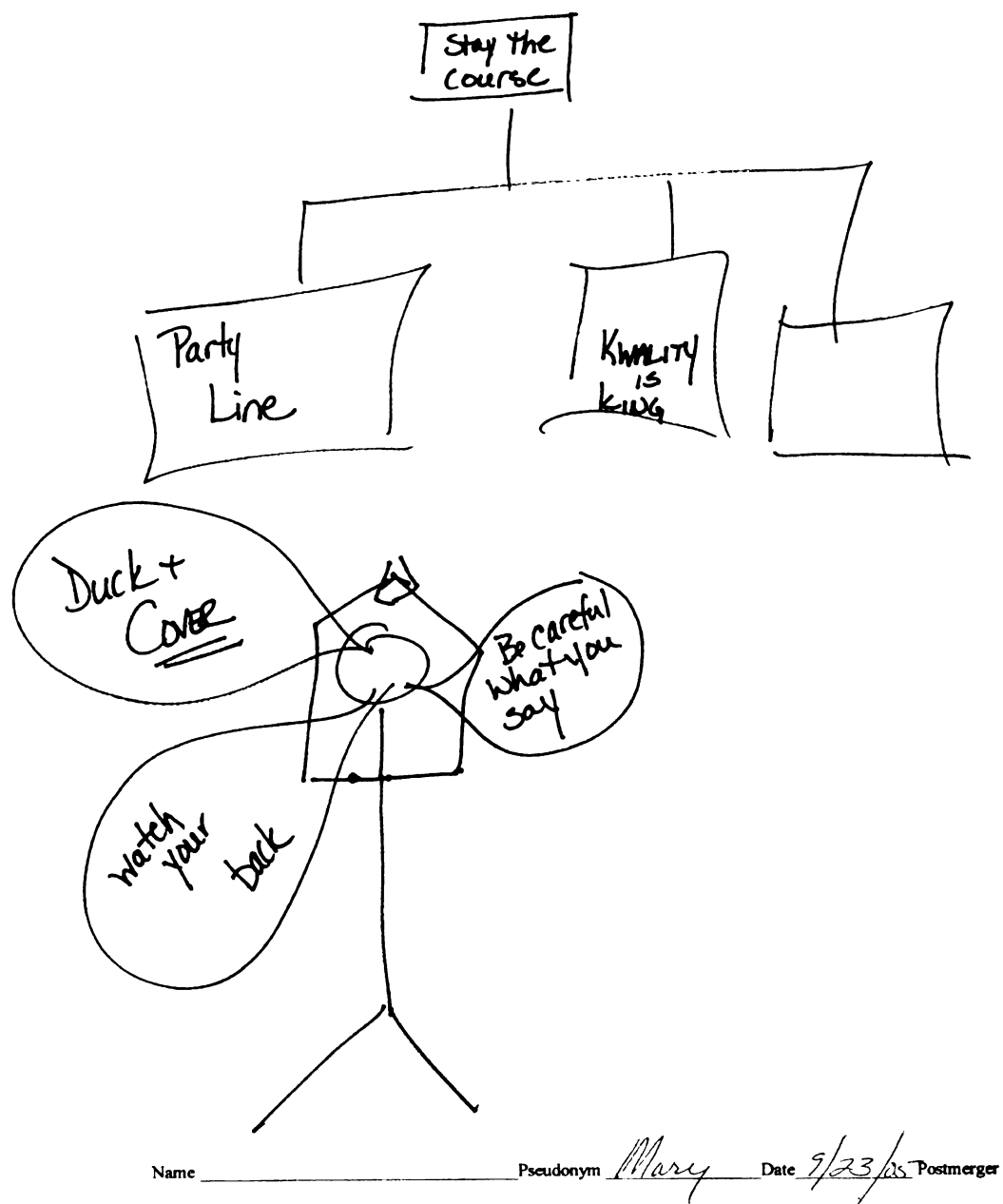


Figure 18. Mary: Post-Merger (drawn by interview participant)

this new role or you can say goodbye' and that's when we went away from an educational culture to an HMO (health maintenance organization) culture.

Mary then related that this action came as a complete surprise to the faculty and **that** not even the campus academic and operational leadership were aware that this would **occur**. Faculty on Mary's campus were always 12 month contract personnel. She **explained** that the pre-merger mode of operation was that faculty did not take time off **when** performing teaching responsibilities during terms, but they were not held to a strict **40** hour a week schedule. During the week, scheduled school breaks or the summer, **faculty** were free to set their own hours, as long as they were fulfilling their work **obligations**. Mary noted, "If you were efficient in performing your duties, you had **additional** flexibility in your working hours." The information in the blue folder **stipulated** that this arrangement was no longer in effect and that any time away from the **regularly** scheduled work week had to be taken as paid time off, which is a combination **of** vacation and sick leave time allocated on a length of service basis. Mary characterized **the** effect of this change in working conditions as, "We immediately, overnight, went to a **culture** that not only didn't reward efficiency, it punished it." Mary also said that there **was** talk of using time clocks for instructors until human resources realized that such a **Practice** might move the salaried faculty, now called department coordinators, into a non-**exempt** employee category where overtime pay was required.

Mary felt that what the merged organization now valued most was, "Party line" **and**, "Singing the company song and doing so without question." In noting what happens

when something goes wrong in this atmosphere of organizational hegemony Mary said, “The lowest level will take the blame. You did it wrong.”

Mary described her reaction and the reaction she saw in others to the manner in which DU was now operating.

It is across the land. [I] talk[ed] to people from today at Convocation, talked to people from Coram, talked to people from Muskego, people I’ve known since pre-merger or worked through the merger process and trust explicitly. Everyone is talking about flying below the radar... we said if we burrow any lower below the radar we’re going to be mole people.

The attention paid to retrenchment and job loss by many of the participants prompted me to investigate the attrition of personnel from DU, particularly from the leadership positions. From organizational documents I reviewed such as college newsletters and the website, I looked at the turn-over of DU executive leadership from the merger to the time of the interviews. In reconstructing the original management team, of the 23 people who held a vice president’s position or above at the start of the merger process, only five remained at the time of the interviews for this study. Of the original deans of the five schools organized after the merger process start (Technology, Allied Health, Business, General Education – called the University School, and Graduate), only one remains and that person was not hired until the fall of 2003, well into the transition. This represents a 74% attrition rate. A similar attrition rate could be found in the executive director and academic dean positions of each campus. Considering that this occurred over only a four year period (2001-2005), the turn-over is even more dramatic.

In an effort to see the potential relationship between enrollment patterns and the personnel cuts, DU enrollment patterns during the merger process years were examined.

The school year enrollment figures for DU at the time of data collection are:

1999	14,836
2000	14,277
2001	14,387
2002	15,083
2003	13,531
2004	13,124
2005	12,700 estimate (Anonymous, 2004)

The reason for the small rise in enrollment in the 2002/2003 was an effort by students to take as many courses as possible before the start of the semester system in the 2003/2004 school year. This assessment is strengthened by looking at the large drop of 1552 students in the 2003/2004 school year.

In total, DU saw its enrollment fall 15% from the pre-merger days to the 2005/2006 school year. When almost all of an organization's revenue is derived from tuition, a drop of 15% enrollment creates a serious financial shortfall. This could explain why additional employment cuts needed to be made even after President Deemer declared at the fall 2003 convocation that no more job eliminations would occur. As Betty commented, "Now why would they get rid of that person if it wasn't for money?" Loss of revenue can also explain the closure of some sites. When the interviews occurred in the fall of 2005, DU had 23 locations, having closed seven very small "center" sized locations since June of 2004. Tim commented that closure of these smaller sites forced the students utilizing those centers to travel further in order to take classes at larger campuses. He also mentioned that students were not very happy about this development.

Additional Post-Merger Topic - *Good to Great*

President Deemer read *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) in 2001 and was apparently taken by the process Collins described to move an organization from a good one to a great one. The word quickly spread from executive leadership to campus leadership to eventually, staff and faculty that this book contained insights on how DU would transform itself during the merger unification. Campus leaders ordered the book en masse from the publisher. As such, *Good to Great* came to symbolize the process DU would undertake in the merger and it forms part of the emerging cultural transformation.

Reading *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) was supposed to give all DU faculty and staff a common reference to how the organization was to achieve greatness. And during the interviews, there were several respondents who used terms like “on the bus” or “the hedgehog” that come from the book. However, I learned that not all of the participants in this study actually read the book to the same extent or found value in it the way President Deemer and other senior leaders intended. Madge said she had either not read it and gave it only cursory attention. Redeye read parts of the book, but not all of it. Betty said she read the book in much the same way a student reads a textbook for a course he/she does not like. Rick, Jack, Jordan, Tim, Bobbi, and Mary all read the book intently and referred back to it several times during the first two years of the merger process. According to Tim and Rick, there was little effort apparent from executive leadership to further qualify the concepts of the text to the merger process or to explain what elements or ideas in the book meant to the people of DU.

Two themes evolved out of the interviews pertaining to *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). Both themes derived from metaphors Collins used to illuminate concepts in *Good*

to Great. The first metaphor is that of the hedgehog. According to Collins, the hedgehog concept is derived from three interlocking circles with each circle representing one of three strategic questions:

1. What are you deeply passionate about?
2. What you can be the best in the world at?
3. What drives your economic engine? (p. 96)

The hedgehog metaphor represents a creature that knows one big thing very well. That differentiates the hedgehog from the fox, which is cunning, calculating, and comes up with myriad, intricate strategies to have the hedgehog for dinner. Despite the fox's numerous strategies for attack, the hedgehog simply rolls up, exposes its sharp quills, and defeats every new attack by the fox. The following quote is important in considering the hedgehog concept in light of the respondents' perception of it.

This brings me to one of the most crucial points of this chapter: A Hedgehog Concept is not a goal to be the best, a strategy to be the best, an intention to be the best, a plan to be the best. It is an *understanding* of what you *can* be the best at. The distinction is absolutely crucial. (Collins, 2001, p. 98)

Betty dismissed the hedgehog immediately as something that was dead. Bobbi took the hedgehog to represent the right direction of the organization. Madge reflected, "The hedgehog was an unusual concept for me to really grasp on [to] and embrace. We were moving forward at a very fast pace and we were going to be leaders and innovators." Redeye did not have much to say about the hedgehog and did not think it was that important to the overall scheme of things. Both Jack and Tim were puzzled by the hedgehog. Jack said, "At the time it really didn't mean anything to me, to be honest

with you.” Tim echoed this by saying, “I never understood the whole thing (hedgehog) and I really never cared.” Jordan dismissed the hedgehog saying, “I never hear anything about the book. The hedgehog was talked about a lot. We got a different one now. It’s about the first day [of class] and the difference between great teachers and okay teachers.”

Rick provided a new perspective on the hedgehog metaphor. A new term called “unified focus” was substituted for the hedgehog sometime in late 2003 or early 2004. Rick continued, “Unified focus became the large word for the hedgehog. Hedgehog talks about core competency and the engine that drives, well, unified focus became the next buzzword for that whole conceptual framework.” Interestingly, Rick commented that unified focus has also, “just kind of trailed off and now we have gone to leadership values and culture and immeasurables and driven by mission.”

Mary was not very impressed with *Good to Great*. “Yes, we were required to read the book and I am a good student, so I read the book,” she said. “I thought it was silly. It was pulp. There was nothing of substance in it. The fact that we were hanging so much weight on it told me that they didn’t know what they were doing.” In referring to the hedgehog Mary said, “The way they applied it, never made sense.”

The other theme that developed was the use of an analogy *on the bus/off the bus*. It is derived from Collins’ (2001) idea that plans should not be developed and strategy should not proceed until the right people are with the organization (on the bus) and the wrong people are separated from the organization (off the bus). In addition, it is important that those persons on the bus are occupying the right seats in the bus. Collins describes the on the bus/off the bus idea as,

To be clear, the main point of this chapter is not just about assembling the right team – that’s nothing new. The main point is to *first* get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) *before* you figure out where to drive it.

The second point is the degree of *sheer rigor* needed in people decisions in order to take a company from good to great. (p. 44)

The second point about rigor is to differentiate it from ruthlessness in personnel decisions and actions.

Madge said that the people she worked with did not refer to on the bus/off the bus in the way it was intended in the book. They used it more to refer to who was fired and who was retained on a personal basis. Betty commented that the bus metaphor, “Oh, yeah, that was a big joke, too. I mean that was, I’d get a [computer account] deactivation notice and the comment in our office was ‘Well, must be they weren’t on the bus’.” She thought of it as “whether I keep my job or not.” Betty shared how the bus metaphor’s use related to people she knew in the organization.

I mean here you had people that took the hedgehog on the bus with them. They worked their butts off and I was just....I was very very angry and I didn’t hesitate to say things. Um, that Jane Doe [pseudonym] got them through their accreditation, got the accreditation they wanted and they cut her loose. Wham! You know, I never accepted that and I wouldn’t — I didn’t make any bones about not accepting it. This was just dirty pool there.

Redeye’s commented this way about the bus metaphor,

Well I thought that with the process of unification it was a good plan or a good idea, it made people feel like, let’s get on . . . Have them get on the bus to go, and

it was kind of a common phrase that was used to one another you know, “get on the bus.” There were some people that I kind of wondered about. Why they were still on the bus, and how are people [were] allowed? But [I did] not know all the details involved. There were a lot of people that stayed on the bus, but they changed seats, they may have been doing something in admissions now and that particular job got eliminated and they went over into student services, you know, something like that. I understood some of those things, but there are still some people that I had questions if they were the right people to be on the bus.

What Jack had to say about the bus metaphor was,

That one I got. Our group understood it and we made many comments about on the bus or under the bus or out of the bus or hit by the bus. ... You’re on the bus or if you weren’t on the bus your job was going to be gone. That created an environment where it was very difficult for people to offer their free opinion. If they dissent... they would be perceived as off the bus and they’re gone.

Tim was more pointed, describing the bus metaphor as, “I think people were offended. I think it was, in a sense, the way it was conveyed was ‘you are going to go along with the new program or you are going to be gone’. ... And someone said to me, probably about six months ago, we need a new bus driver.”

Rick was quite candid in describing the bus concept, saying, “Well that came back to bite them in the butt.” He related the convocation event of fall 2003 when President Deemer told the assembly that everyone who is on the bus will stay on the bus. As Rick stated,

Well that didn't happen and people noticed that and that came back several times [when additional numbers of job eliminations continued] and it's still coming back, 'you said everybody is on the bus.' Well they jumped off that bus analogy in a heart beat after that. You didn't hear about the bus anymore.

Jordan related a comment made by his daughter, whose company was also reading *Good to Great* at that time, "I don't care who is on the bus, I just want to make sure somebody can fix the bus when it breaks down," and then added, "obviously everybody on the bus right now has no clue where the bus is going."

The Post-Merger Phase – Summary

The post-merger picture emerging from the interviews contains several elements relating to the merger that can have implications for the organizational culture evolution that took place. The first is that those interviewed expressed good or, at least, optimistic feelings about the merger at the start. Whether this impression is due to genuine buy-in to the merger goals and values or was tempered by the realization that being in accordance with the merger was needed for survival is not clear. It seems reasonable to think that both are true.

There is a strong indication that several participants lacked respect for the talent, decisions, and the expertise of the executive leadership team. Rick, Mary, and Jordan used terms such as "they don't know what they are doing" or "they don't have a clue" to express this opinion. Part of their feeling may have been due to the high turn-over in leadership positions.

Several participants also questioned the decisions and expertise of leadership for the manner in which jobs were eliminated. Several of those interviewed mentioned the

fact that someone was suddenly gone or they were escorted off the premises. Mary related what she called “the blue folder day” and Madge described something very similar. Essentially, staff was presented with a “take it or leave” proposal or they had to reapply for the reorganized positions. Mary also used the phrase “we are dying” to describe this perception. Jordan commented that there was not any real strategic plan. Rick was more indirect in saying that the president was not prepared for the job, implying that his choices of organizational direction might not be the best.

One of the most prominent issues brought to light is the perception that communication during the merger transition process was wanting. Jordan, Mary, Tim and Rick made comments like “you have to be politically correct,” “duck and cover,” “watch what you say,” or “keep under the radar.” At the same time, leadership made decisions on institutional directions or processes and often released the news in a limited or piece-meal fashion. Communication problems were raised in employee surveys as early as 2002. As of January 2005, executive leadership began addressing the communication issue by instituting an e-mail newsletter, in addition to the monthly web site newsletter (Anonymous, 2005 January 19). This was a response to feedback received in the employee forums conducted in the fall of 2004, earlier referred to as a series of town hall meetings. However, the leadership perception of communication problems was that the issues were the result of local campus leadership not communicating effectively to staff, instead of miscommunication by executive management to campus leaders. In the same issue of the newsletter a web-based version of the old suggestion box called Contact DU was announced to provide an additional input vehicle for staff with unanswered questions.

The post-merger data indicates a significant shift in participant perceptions from the generally satisfied, family-like climate with the pre-merger organizations to one of dissatisfaction, puzzlement, and fear after the merger. This is demonstrated in post-merger respondent statements that leadership lacks competence, made unwise decisions on the directions of the institution, incongruence between what is stated by leadership and their actual practices, inhibited communication from the bottom up, and flawed communication from the top down.

Chapter Five: Discussion

In consideration of the expansive data obtained here, the discussion portion of this study needs to begin with an overview of what the data shows the reader with regard to the influences of organizational culture in the merger to form Davis University. The discussion will then move to consideration of research questions two and three for the specificity of these questions lend themselves to an elaboration of the topics introduced in the overview. The first research question, being more global in scope, will incorporate a synthesis of various conclusions derived from research questions two and three. Therefore, it is more logical to address those matters at the end of the discussion.

Overview

The data obtained from the participants indicating inhibited communication up and down the hierarchy, incongruence between leaders' words and actions, and doubts over the organizational decisions of leadership have led to the participants questioning leadership competence. Essentially, there has been a breakdown in the culture of familial trust experienced by participants in their pre-merger institutions, where the instability of leadership processes has introduced an isolating influence on the developing culture of Davis University. Characterization of this is best illustrated by Mary's comment, "if we burrow any lower below the radar, we're going to be mole people." This suggests that most of the participants are responding to a significant lack of trust that has entered the culture of DU. This same isolation of staff when experiencing mistrust has been reported by Pepper and Larson (2006) and Wells and Kipnis (2001).

Any discussion of how trust manifests in an organizational culture must begin with a definition of trust. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) propose that trust is,

The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. (p. 711)

While not precisely a definition, Mollering (2001) uses the functional aspect of trust to describe “a state of favourable expectation regarding other people’s actions and intentions” (p. 712). Searle and Ball (2004) qualify this further by arguing that since trust is an expectation, “Trust is therefore, based on a awareness of imperfect knowledge” (p. 709). The converging factor in these statements is that of expectation.

Expectation is precisely the word to describe the faculty and staff members entering this merger. There was little in the participants’ remarks that indicated a disagreement per se with the conceptual idea of the three schools merging. In fact, several of those interviewed related that the merger was an overall positive thing for the school. The work of Covin, Kolenko, Sightler, and Tudor (1996) found that the organizational members in their study may be resentful of the merger, but saw it as a vehicle to enhance the stability of the company, enhancing their long-term employment. More often, the joining of two or more companies is attended by worry and fear as employees are concerned about lower level Maslow needs like the viability of receiving their paycheck (Slowinski, et al., 2002). The interviews revealed a palatable level of fear and anxiety among the members of Davis throughout the merger process.

These members came from pre-merger cultures where a basic organizational assumption was greater enrollment leading to revenue enhancement. This organizational assumption yielded an operational approach in the pre-merger schools that stressed a top-down hierarchical control and decision-making on important strategic issues or

directions. Staff input was how that strategy was to be carried out. Within that sphere of freedom, the staff of each school developed practices, procedures, symbols, and rituals to accomplish their strategic direction. The empowerment of being able to operate within a sphere of freedom is considered as one factor promoting the family-like culture to the pre-merger organizations.

The empowerment and family-like cultural expectation was upset as executive leadership not only controlled strategic direction, but also governed the local day-to-day ways of working by insisting on complete procedural uniformity in the system. As Sopow (2006) states it, “Most corporate structures and management systems today are based on an organization’s historical and developmental factors – its culture- that in turn create the day-to-day climate” (p. 14). The expectation of stability was upset with the merger, especially where employees’ expectations in the merged organization were either not explained well or suddenly changed, i.e., the unannounced discontinuation of the hedgehog and bus analogies. When employees who questioned the DU merger implementation approaches, regardless of how legitimate they considered their questions to be, found themselves off the bus, other employees reacted with fear of the same happening to them. The result was an atmosphere of coercive power wielding (Wells and Kipnis, 2001) to which organizational members reacted, as described by several participants, with phrases like “duck and cover” or “just shut up and do your job.”

Research Questions Two and Three

The results obtained in this study developed in a manner that co-mingles addressing both the second and third research questions. The second question is, “What are the perceptions of the academic and operational professionals to the cultural

development of a merged higher education institution?” The third research question is, “How do these professionals deal with the congruence and incongruence between organizational symbols, espoused values, and the basic assumptions of culture?” The data reveal that how the professionals deal with incongruence of the cultural features of artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions plays a role in their formation of perception regarding the cultural development of the organization.

In order to address the second and third research questions, it is necessary to establish what formed the expectations of newly created DU members to the merger process, in addition to their pre-merger school cultural constructs. The most persuasive evidence for these expectations was found in the mission, values, guiding principles, and especially, the Framework for Success documents of the merged organization, which were intended to create a set of espoused values. However, espoused values do not have to be in documents only, but can reflect what executive leadership believes the organization is or what it aspires to become (Daley, Pouder, & Kabanoff, (2004). Written statements as a vehicle for expressing espoused values is also consistent with a uniting function of culture (Meyerson and Martin, 1987) where leadership intends to integrate culture across the organization, provide uniformity to cultural features, and provide consensus in beliefs and interpretations among members.

When the intent of these documents is examined against the statements of the participants, there are several areas of incongruence, which serve to illuminate the third research question. For example, “regular and open communication will be the hallmark of Davis University,” as found in the framework for success, does not characterize the comments participants related to inadequate communication from executive leadership

and the perceived inability of staff to safely communicate their concerns upward through the hierarchy. The participants' comments on communication ranged from the largely benign "you have to be politically correct" to the more cynical "duck and cover." Murphy and Davey (2002) found that when official values are not perceived as seriously encompassing the change effort, those values can be viewed in a cynical manner. They suggest that this is due to the executive leadership personnel not faithfully enacting the espoused values. In turn, the mid-level administrators conformed to the detachment of espoused values from the reality of their implementation out of concern for their jobs.

Another example involves the president's advocacy and promotion of the book *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) as a method to achieve greatness for the university. My assessment is that the ideas of this book were so heavily used by the president in the initial two years of the merger that *Good to Great* assumes the characteristic of espoused values for the organization. Terms like the hedgehog and on the bus/off the bus became common parlance at Davis. However, it appears that the participants' perceptions of the president's actions in managing school operations did not emulate the principles represented by the hedgehog or the bus metaphors. Therefore, the meaning of these metaphors for employees shifted from Collins' original meaning to divisive terms representing fear, isolation, or that the *Good to Great* philosophy was not taken seriously by leadership.

One example of leadership demonstrating it was not taking the *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) philosophy as Collins' intended is the attrition seen in the management team. The initial management team, in keeping with the espoused 'on the bus' metaphor, were accepted by the staff members. As the merger transition continued, the people

comprising this management team changed so that about three quarters were gone within the period of this study. Many of the leaders who were lost to attrition were perceived by staff members as fulfilling the attributes of those who should be 'on the bus.' Enrollment fell and revenue decreased resulting in additional large numbers of terminations, even after the president declared that everyone present at the 2003 convocation was "on the bus." In this way the underlying organizational basic assumption for DU of increasing revenue by increasing enrollment was being violated. The only way for leadership to immediately remain somewhat faithful to the revenue imperative was to cut additional jobs, even though it contradicted the President's "on the bus" statement in 2003.

Actions in apparent contradiction to the "hedgehog" concept such as orienting the organization away from the majority adult-learner population pre-merger and diminishing business-oriented educational strategies (cooperative programs) led to the perception that leadership is not up to the task of setting the direction of the university. "They are making it up as they go" was the comment of one respondent. As symbols, the hedgehog and on the bus/off the bus came to mean something very different and were used by staff in cynical ways, which were never intended by leadership.

Leadership qualities have been identified with employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction with mergers. Covin, Kolenko, Sigtler, and Tudor (1997) found that a leader's people skills, especially consideration toward others e.g., respect, communication, showing one's value, is crucial to the satisfaction of employees for a merger. There are indications from the findings of this study that those people skills are not perceived to be strong because members existed in a state of fear of and had to watch what they said to the president and members of executive administration. Block (2003)

stresses the need for leaders to understand the human dynamic of their organization when effecting cultural change. Schein (2004) considers leadership and the culture of the organization to be one and the same thing. The results of this study indicate the president of DU did not appreciate the human response to his use of concepts from *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) and what might happen if he led the organization to take actions that employees could readily perceive as being in contradiction to those concepts.

Additional findings of this study relating to leadership indicate the need for effective, open communication between executive leadership and staff members is important for staff to form a perception of trust in the merger process and the leadership charting that process. As such, this finding contributes to addressing research question three. This is similar to the results obtained by Lodorfos and Boateng (2006) and Nikandrou, Papalexandris, and Bourantas (2000). Lodorfos and Boateng found that frequent communication that contains useful information is needed to enhance employee perceptions of trust in management. Their results found that a lack of or poor communication is frequently associated with expressions of distrust.

Prior to and during the early phases of the merger, there is little indication from the participants or the Davis documentation that the leadership had an appreciation of or had prepared for how individual pre-merger organizational cultures of the three schools would influence the merger itself. Perhaps the cultural similarities between the three pre-merger institutions influenced the leadership to believe that blending the three college cultures would not be difficult. On the other hand, there are indications from the participant data of Rick, Tim, Jordan, and Mary that a blend of cultures was not being planned, but rather there was an ending of pre-merger cultural norms to be replaced by a

new Davis University culture. This does not appear to have been communicated well to organizational members and what was communicated directly through documents like the Framework for Success or indirectly by touting *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) were soon perceived by employees as being contradicted by leadership actions.

Lodorfos and Boateng (2006) stress that pre-merger attention to cultural considerations is associated with lessened anxieties in personnel and Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) found if leadership provides a realistic merger forecast of what is to come that post-merger employee satisfaction is enhanced. What might be characterized as the less than happy responses of the participants in this study toward the results of the merger gives tacit support to this recommendation.

At the beginning of the Davis merger process it appears that the vision, values, and direction were effectively communicated by executive administration in written form and reinforced in verbal comments consistent with those ends. The data from the participants indicate that it was when the later actions and observed behaviors of the leadership contradicted those espoused values and direction, distrust began to surface. Douglas, Burtis, and Pond-Burtis (2001) report that “communication is the medium through which the vision is articulated to the followers, but communication has little to do with the actual creation of the vision” (p. 58). While that assessment is essentially correct, the results of this study add additional qualification that communication is not only a written and verbal process, but also one that embodies behavior that is consistent with the espoused qualities of the vision, values, and direction of the organization. As such, this conclusion is consistent with the findings of Senge (1990) and Arygris and

Schön (1978) that when the theories in use by an organization conflict with its espoused values, organizational dysfunction is a likely result.

The information derived from participants indicates a convergence of issues arising from the communication of espoused values, the perception by participants that leadership was not living those values, and developing mistrust of leadership by the participants as a result. These issues appear to have a reciprocal relationship where each leadership action perceived as not matching an espoused value leads to less communication and, thereby, to the development of greater mistrust. This decrease in communication is seen best by Mary's comment of "don't tell the emperor he's naked" for fear that expressing dissent will jeopardize continued employment. Essentially, there is a lack of trust in leadership's actions and intentions. This study's findings are consistent with those of Kavanagh and Ashkanasy (2006) who found that managers without sufficient skills in change management or communication can lead to staff being critical of the merger process itself and those who manage it. Kavanagh and Ashkanasy add, "This had consequent detrimental effects on the ability of individuals to embrace the changes required by the merger and view the new organization and new culture in a positive manner" (p. S98). The results of the study presented here are also consistent with Hoogervorst, van der Flier, and Koopman (2004) who found "cynicism among employees is repeatedly the result of inconsistent message being received" (p. 288).

The findings of cynicism and distrust at Davis are similar to the assessment of Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005) that cynicism and distrust co-exist. Where these results differ from Stanley et al., is in the relationship between cynicism and resistance to change. Stanley et al., reported that higher levels of cynicism prompted people to indicate

that they would actively resist change. I can find no evidence of active resistance to the merger changes. There are indications that participants in my study manifest their distrust by withdrawing, staying below notice, or simply concentrating on doing only their assigned tasks with little added on the basis of personal initiative. The Davis personnel used gossip and the grapevine to convey stories about the leadership's mis-steps and reported dissatisfaction with Davis executive leadership communications. This suggests that an additional feeling of apathy or powerlessness could influence the intention to resist change brought on by cynicism or distrust and also contributes to answering research question three (Searle, 2004).

Another interesting finding in this study is the expressions of mistrust by participants were directed toward people in a more personal manner, rather than to the position the person took on any particular issue. For example, Tim was not apparently upset that the student co-operative program with employers was eliminated from his duties. However, he was upset with executive leadership for not preparing the new program coordinators for the demands of this role and for allowing the program to wither. This finding is consistent with the description of Wells and Kipnis (2001) who reported that when subordinates spoke of trust issues in regard to their managers, they did so in terms of personal attributes and not job-related issues. Wells and Kipnis attribute this to our larger socio-cultural perception that "trust and distrust are customarily linked to the personal attributes of the person (p. 600)."

The vertical sampling of participants in this study produced comments that showed some variation between lower level staff, mid-level management, and executive management. Staff (Madge, Betty, and Redeye) commented more on what I characterize

as “people issues” and issues related to their immediate jobs than larger strategic or cultural issues surrounding the merger. Mid-level personnel (Bobbi, Tim, Mary, and Jordan) comments were a mix of people-related and larger strategic issues. Executive level personnel (Jack and Rick) talked largely of strategic issues and, to a lesser degree, of people issues. These findings approximate the report of Bijlsema-Frankema (2004) and others studying organizational issues in higher education and other sectors by personnel who occupy different levels of an organizational hierarchy (Morgan, 1997).

Research Question One

This leaves the larger first question of the study “When higher education organizations merge, what is the influence of organizational culture?” to be addressed. This cannot be explored by looking at the individual facets of the merger presented in this study for that could imply actions taken were right or wrong, correct or incorrect.

The evidence from the pre-merger institutions revealed three organizations with relatively similar cultures consisting of a locally family-like atmosphere, but where executive leadership exerted control over the strategic directions without considering the input of most mid-level and staff level professionals. Input of members at the lower levels of the hierarchy was primarily reserved to devise methods and processes to achieve strategic directions decided by senior leaders. If a person was looking to identify potential merger partners that were alike in the fundamental facets of organizational culture, Glen Lincoln College, Decatur College of Business, and Davis College appeared to be as close a match as independent institutions could be. Perhaps that is why more extensive investigations and preparations for merging the cultures did not occur.

When the merger occurred, it was met with some anxiety by members, but apparently not disproportionately so. A new leader was brought in who enjoyed a “leap of faith” trust by the members. A new set of mission, values, and framework for what Davis University would do, stand for, and mean were composed and generally well received by the members. The stage was set for the transition process to occur.

What happened next provides insight into the influence of culture in a higher education merger. The apparent strategy, whether it was overt or tacit, was to suppress the pre-merger cultures and replace them with a new one embodying the rhetoric of the university mission, Guiding Principles, Framework for Success and, in a less formal manner, the symbolism attendant to Good to Great (Collins, 2001). This is similar to what Grubbs (2000) calls cultural imperialism, where the culture of the acquiring or dominant firm imposes their culture on the weaker partner(s). However, the difference is the new Davis University culture was not yet enacted at the start of the merger; it had only been espoused. Therefore, it was not a dominant culture, but a culture in waiting. The leadership of Davis acted as though this culture in waiting was dominant. The evidence of this study implies that a new organizational culture cannot simply be proclaimed or willed into existence, but it is enacted in smaller steps over time that gradually move members away from the old and into the new culture as that new culture becomes evident. Amis, Slack and Hinings (2002) contend that the nature of reaction to change is governed by how closely the values held by individuals match the changes being proposed. At DU the values held by most of the participants of this study did not seem to coincide with the changes being asked for by leadership. This was especially the

case when the participants perceived that the leadership was not acting in a manner consistent with their espoused changes.

Organizational members were cut off from the cultural underpinnings that sustained them in the pre-merger institutions. Even the use of the pre-merger school names was actively discouraged by executive leadership. However because the new Davis culture, as envisioned by leadership, had not yet surfaced in a meaningful way, members existed in a kind of limbo. The combination of the understandable merger anxiety and leadership personnel not readily acting out the values they wanted the new DU culture to be created a very uncomfortable situation for members. Results indicate that some members reverted to operating according to the pre-merger culture while appearing to embrace the espoused values of the new organization.

The second influence of culture on a merger is the realization that acculturating processes do not stop. During the gap in time between where the leadership hoped for ending of the pre-merger cultures and the supposed enactment of the culture as envisioned by leadership, the culture of Davis University was already forming in ways that were unplanned. Reorganizations occurred, curricula were combined, and terminations happened in a manner that contradicted the impression left by the Guiding Principles, Framework for Success, etc. about how Davis would function. This resulted in an alternative culture evolving, characterized by many organizational members becoming outwardly conforming to what they thought the new culture was supposed to be, but cynical and distrustful of the executive leadership's intentions and competence. One telling comment by Rick indicated that Davis was [at the time of the interviews] going to finally begin culture change and development workshops across the university; this is

telling because the interviews took place almost five years after the start of the merger process. This leads to the conclusion that organizational culture forms and develops on its own accord through the actions of all organizational members. If the leadership in a merger process acts contrary to their espoused intentions, organizational members may not interpret the culture in keeping with the espoused intentions leadership desires.

Morgan (1997) discusses leadership that attempts to influence organizational culture by relying substantially on metaphor as operating at “the level of slogans” (p.143). As such, Morgan says that by operating at that level the mechanisms of culture change usually have a minimal effect on organizational reality. The effect of DU’s leadership attempt to install their version of cultural reality, particularly the use of the bus and hedgehog metaphor, seems to have yielded the same result. Schein (2004) points out that, “Change then occurs through cognitive redefinition of key concepts, and the resulting behavioral changes become unfrozen in the personalities of the individuals and in the norms and routines of the group” (p. 312). The results of my study indicate the behavioral changes of participants became unfrozen, but not through the cultural changes DU leadership advocated. Instead, the participants’ perception of incongruence between DU leadership’s espoused values and DU leadership’s operational behavior in implementing those espoused values is what led to the change in beliefs and behaviors.

Any effort to now orient the culture toward the original mission, vision, and framework does not look favorable. Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) found, “The negative effects of mergers and acquisitions activity do not seem to simply go away with time but seem, instead to get more serious (p. 127).” Schweiger and DeNisi add that with attrition over time, satisfaction with the organization will increase because new members become

acculturated to the new situation and do not have the institutional memory of long-standing members. They caution that this apparent increase in satisfaction is illusory and does not indicate the enactment of the desired culture, but accommodation to the one that exists.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are bounded by the small number of persons interviewed in a qualitative manner. The findings of this study do not necessarily predict what the influence of culture would be to another set of higher education organizations that choose to merge. Instead, it sheds light on what happened to the institution in question and suggest reasons why it happened. The type of higher education institution studied is also somewhat unique in being a career-oriented private independent university with multiple campuses, largely in one state. Results could vary if the institutions involved in a merger were public colleges and universities.

Summary

In the study presented here, the professional staff is not satisfied with how the merger transition was conducted and the data show that at least part of that dissatisfaction can be traced to the incongruence of artifacts, espoused values, and the observed or perceived behavior of the school's leadership over the course of the transition merger. The organizational members' response to the culture development of the merged university was dependent partly on the perception of this incongruence in artifacts, espoused values, and the behavior of the school's leadership. Last, the findings suggest that culture exists and develops regardless of overt or tacit intentions to create or shape it.

Delay in addressing culture issues in a higher education mergers means that a culture not necessarily of leadership's direct choice will develop.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Many of the stories and experiences elicited from the participants will be initially determined from an assessment of the drawings completed from the participants prior to the interview portion of the data collection. It is important to understand that these are presented in the parlance of questions, but will not necessarily be asked in a question/answer manner. All areas of discussion will allow for the participant to add and elaborate freely. All participants will be allowed to comment and discuss topics or areas not specifically addressed in these areas below. However, the areas and themes discussed with the participants will lead toward satisfying information needs in the following topics.

Initial reaction to the news that your organization was to merge with the other two.

What thoughts went through your mind?

Did you discuss it with others in your organization? If, so what was your impression of their reaction?

Did you discuss it with your family? If, so what was your impression of their reaction?

Were there any events or incidents that struck you as significant in the initial stages of learning about the merger?

Was the "official" rationale(s) given for the merger consistent with informal information you received by either senior leadership or others?

Activities in the merger plan by the participant (after announcement).

What duties were you asked or volunteered to do?

What was your attitude and the attitude of your peers and subordinates to those activities?

Describe any incidents or situations that tended to be either positive or negative.

Based on the actions and activities you saw going around you, what was your attitude toward the manner in which the merger was going forward?

Perceptions of new culture.

What were the first indications that the climate of the new organization was going to be different than your pre-merger organization?

What are the similarities in climate between the pre and post merger organizations?

Are there parts of the new climate that don't match with what the leadership is saying they want to create?

What were the symbols used to convey the idea of a new way of doing things?

Did the symbols add or detract from your perception of the underlying message?

The process of culture change

Did (do) you perceive consistency in the creation and fostering of a new organizational climate?

Have the symbols, rituals, or stories currently in the organization matched your perception of the underlying value(s) that is/are trying to be conveyed?

What parts of the transformation from (name of the participant's prior institution) have succeeded, what parts have not?

If you were in charge at the start of the merger, how would you have proceeded and what would you have done?

Overall impressions of the merger from a cultural point of view

Is Davis University today a stronger institution compared to the sum of three prior institutions?

What is your perception of the primary attitudes, principles, or subliminal messages that guide Davis University?

Has the merger been successful when considered against those primary attitudes, principles, or subliminal messages?

Responses and conversation related to the above areas will be coded as relating most closely to one of the three research questions.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B: Drawing Instructions to the Participants

The following instructions will be printed on the reverse side of each sheet of drawing paper. The paper size will be 8.5 by 11 inches to facilitate digital scanning. The only labeling on the drawing side of the paper will be the pseudonym of the participant and which drawing (pre-merger organization or post-merger organization) this drawing represents.

“You are asked to draw your impressions to the following question (appearing then will be one of the two instructions listed in the methodology section)

“Think about the work and atmosphere that you feel best represents your workplace at (name of the prior institution). Draw a picture of yourself working for (name of prior institution).

“Think about the work and atmosphere that you feel best represents your workplace at (name of the merged institution).

You may use any combination of the color markers, pencil, or pen provided. You may use captions or numbering in the drawing, you may also label the identity of people, and have them “speak” using newspaper cartoon “verbal balloons” if you wish.

Drawing can seem like a funny thing for adults to do. As we grow up, most of us are encouraged to set aside drawing in favor of writing. This can lead to adults being reluctant to draw as a way of expressing themselves. Try your best not to feel embarrassed or self-conscious about your drawing ability.” There is no right or wrong when it comes to expressing yourself.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C: Letters of Invitation to Participate and Permission Authorization

Note: Pseudonyms for the institutional names have been inserted here, but the original letter of invitation named the actual institutions. No letterhead was used.

August 18, 2005

Dear

My name is Michael Wambach and I am a doctoral student in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education through the College of Education at Michigan State University. I am completing my dissertation requirements with a study of the organizational and human dynamics events that occur when higher education organizations merge operations. The Human Resources office of Davis University has identified you as someone who has worked with one of the pre-merger institutions for at least three years and continuing with the merged Davis University to the present time.

I invite you to participate in a study I am conducting to examine the experiences of those who have participated in a merger of colleges. The study will involve an in-depth interview session, which is constructed to allow you to express your experiences verbally and artistically. The interview session method is designed to be minimally intrusive on your time. I am able to schedule this interview session with you either at your workplace during working hours or outside of the workplace and outside of work hours.

Participation in the study is purely voluntary on your part. There will no monetary payment or benefit for participation. Whether you participate or not, all communication with me will be held in the strictest confidence and not divulged to anyone at Davis University. You can indicate your acceptance of this invitation contacting me by phone or email. If you have questions about being included in the study that you would like answered before accepting, then feel free to contact me. My contact information is listed below. Acceptance of this invitation does not mean automatic inclusion in the study, as there is a methodological need to assure approximately even distribution of participants in different job categories from the three pre-merger institutions.

I hope you will assist me in this investigation. Please complete the brief form and return it to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided.

Michael Wambach, Doctoral Candidate
Higher, Adult, and Life-Long Learning Program
Michigan State University
3833 Keeweenaw NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
(616) 361-8117 mwambach@comcast.net

Note: The following is an example of the permission form that was signed by qualified participants. No letterhead was be used. Pseudonyms for the institutional names have been inserted here, but the original permission form named the actual institutions.

I, (name of participant) agree to participate in the investigation being conducted by Michael Wambach, doctoral candidate at Michigan State University. I understand that I will be interviewed concerning my experiences surrounding the merger of Glen Lincoln College, Decatur College of Business, and Davis College to create Davis University.

I understand that my participation in this study will be held in strictest confidence. No one at Davis University will know whether I have or have not participated. Any identification of me to members of Michigan State University will only be done in accordance with the rules of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS), as per Michigan State University policy.

I understand that representations of what I discuss at the interview will be portrayed in a manner that does not identify me. Questions that I may have concerning this investigation can be posed to Michael Wambach, principle investigator.

Signed _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D: Framework for Success

Note: The institutional pseudonym used in this study is substituted for the actual name of the university depicted in this study.

FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

The Uniqueness of Davis University

Learning is our highest purpose and first priority. To that end, we will deliver innovative academic programs that offer students a truly practical business education. Davis University is in the business of education and as such will place quality education at the core of our goals and strategies. We will be responsive to a changing business environment and will prepare students for the world of work, getting them where they want to be quicker than other higher education institutions.

- **Quality programs.** Have a strong and vibrant program development process that produces high-quality, cutting-edge programs with applications in the workplace.
- **Flexibility and efficiency.** Respect the need for a wide range of course and program offerings, placing value on an efficient education (price and time) when preparing students (regardless of age) for work and a technology-driven workplace.
- **Student services.** Operate an outstanding system for assessment of learning needs, ongoing student advising, and employment services.
- **Partnerships with business.** Build and maintain close relationships and partnerships with local employers: Outreach to businesses, including unique

internships, and faculty-business practitioners that will guide us toward curricula that will meet student needs much better than our competition.

- **Committed, thoughtful employees.** Recruit, reward, and retain employees dedicated to a culture of customer service, innovation, and personal accountability. We will create a culture in which Davis University employees will be encouraged to share good ideas and best practices; this is essential to excellence.
- **Long-term commitment to the vision.** We will remain focused on this vision for the long haul. We will move beyond semester-to-semester thinking by pursuing goals and strategies that will build a vibrant and prosperous university.

Academics

Davis University will offer an innovative curriculum and educational delivery system that students seeking a practical business education will prefer. Our curriculum and its delivery will have no close substitute. This Davis academic franchise will be characterized by the following:

- Davis will stand for open enrollment, but not open graduation. Our reputation and ability to attract students depend on delivering a high-quality practical business education that will get students jobs and drive career advancement. Any person wanting to pursue higher education will be given the chance to succeed at Davis, but students will be expected to work hard to obtain their diplomas and degrees.
- Students will be well prepared for school and work through a highly integrated approach that combines assessment of learning needs, personal academic plans

and goals, appropriate and challenging courses and programs, practical application of academic disciplines through internships, and student advising.

- Davis University will rely on standard outcomes assessment for students, benchmarked against real world measurements (for example, CPA exam).
- The Davis University Excellence System will be woven through the curriculum and distinguish the University's ability to build practical business skills.
- Our faculty will have practical experience, understand current business issues and emerging trends, and be dedicated to teaching students who expect a practical business education. Development of full-time and adjunct faculty will be a prime directive for the University.
- Davis University will maintain an open door admissions policy. This necessitates a comprehensive program of developmental education. Students will be assessed upon admission to determine the most appropriate academic plans. When necessary, developmental programs will assure that students possess the skills to excel in school and succeed in the workplace.
- Our unified curriculum will be adaptable to the changing business environment. The curriculum will be founded upon a program development process led by a multi-disciplinary and multi-functional team; it will include new programs grounded in emerging business practices as well as current program and course life-cycle analysis.
- Davis will be dedicated to a broad range of options in its programming and curriculum, including accelerated degrees; flexible schedules within a semester

calendar format; competency-based credits; and credit and non-credit business and industry training.

- Our racial and cultural diversity will be a source of pride and will uphold our commitment to a student body that reflects the businesses and communities we serve.
- We will create a state-of-the-art library system that can meet the unique needs of a multi-campus, geographically dispersed university.
- Internships will be central to practical learning, providing hands-on experience. Davis internships will be flexible enough to accommodate working students.
- Davis will explore strategic alliances with other education institutions to reach current and new target markets and broaden program offerings.
- Our students will learn the value of community service and have instilled in them a civic responsibility that is essential to a balanced life.

Customer Service

Davis University Davis University's commitment to practical business education lies in the personal attention it gives to students and the closeness of its links to local businesses. By listening to students and local businesses, we will serve each much better. Davis will be recognized as the leader in customer service among institutions of higher education. The customer service culture will permeate every campus and level of the University.

- Davis will excel at assessing learning needs of students and employer workforces, designing programs and delivery methods to address identified needs and measuring outcomes against employer-driven learning goals.

- We will move toward assigning each prospective and current student to one person, who will guide him/her through Davis University, providing a single point of contact for answering (or getting the answers from others) for all their questions. This personalized contact will be the start of a system for life long counseling that serves alumni as they advance in their careers.
- We will develop ways of assessing university employees' performance so that exemplary customer service can be identified and rewarded.
- Customer service also means offering a collegiate atmosphere that builds pride in students' affiliation with the University. This includes student clubs, athletics, and service learning.
- Davis will build meaningful partnerships with local businesses to reinforce service to students in their education, training, career planning, and job placement.
- To understand what businesses need, the University will integrate local community advisory activity with the University's Academic Councils. This will provide the University with regular input on cutting-edge practices in the disciplines we teach.
- A student advisory function will be vital to gathering information on how best to assure that our customer service is student-centered.

Organizational Development and Excellence

Davis University will create and maintain an exciting culture that is open and creative, and where people have the skills and resources to excel in their work. Faculty and staff will be encouraged to help improve the University. The Davis culture will be founded

upon integrity in all behaviors, exemplary customer service, the embracing of change, and an abiding commitment to the quality of education.

- There will be a university program that will promote and enhance dialogue on ideas. Regular and open communication will be a hallmark of Davis University. Faculty and staff will be encouraged to help improve the University. Processes will be put into place to bring leadership and employees together regularly to share ideas and provide critical feedback on improving the University.
- The University will commit resources to employee education, ongoing training in customer service, and team building.
- We will be committed to excellence in every facet of operation. Davis will be the best in its markets and practices, or it will exit those markets and change operating procedures respectively.
- Employees will be held accountable for performance and rewarded based upon a merit system that will recognize risk taking, innovation, creative thinking, decisiveness, customer service, teamwork, and personal initiative.
- The University will develop systems to promote people into progressively higher positions. Roles and responsibilities will be assessed regularly to assure appropriate progress toward the highest quality education and exemplary customer service.

Campus Operation

We will function as one university with unified strategies and operating standards that are executed at the campus level. Standardized university policy and practice, along with centralized support services, will free up campus leadership to be more involved with the

workings of the university, strengthen retention efforts, build relationships with local businesses and civic leaders, and participate in fund raising. Campus and academic leaders will be enriched by their new roles.

- We want campus leadership to contribute significantly to the University's—and not just their own campus's—progress. Unification will put campus leaders in a position to be much more involved in university business.
- Campus leaders will help develop and implement skill assessment programs and delivery methods that produce desired outcomes for students.
- Campus leaders will create local internship opportunities and provide mentoring that expose students to the real world of work and value of hands-on experience.
- Davis will streamline financial aid processes and assure that the administration of financial aid supports the goals of the University.
- Broad implementation of the best practices of our campuses will be essential to the success of the University.
- Campus leadership will be assessed upon their success in building and leading community coalitions; working with business leaders to form local business advisory groups; creating partnerships with local high schools, community colleges, and other organizations that are sources of new students; and generally contributing to the image of Davis University through positive community public relations.
- Working with Advancement, campus leaders will be involved in local fund development, campaign planning, and donor development.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention will focus on the University's ability to identify and meet student learning needs. The mindset must be to enable students to achieve their learning goals rather than simply measuring persistence from semester to semester.

- Enrollment personnel will take personal responsibility for successfully processing a student lead from application to enrollment, including successfully arranging for all available financial aid options.
- Retention will be dependent upon all university personnel—faculty and staff—recognizing that the classroom experience (first-rate teaching of practical content) is the foundation for retention.
- We will reach into high schools through Career Pathways and other outreach initiatives.
- A university information system will track contacts and support customer service. With the best technology available, we will develop a system that helps profile students and match learning needs with programs.

Marketing

The University will forge a Davis University brand and image that highlights its commitment to practical business education and customer service. Market research and technology will allow us to identify and pursue target populations who have the best chance of excelling at Davis. Marketing will also aggressively promote programs to strengthen recruitment and retention.

- All of our constituencies will understand that the Davis University brand is practical business education with exemplary customer service.

- Davis will regularly identify market opportunities and develop plans for penetrating these markets.
- We will operate in markets as long as we can continue to meet student needs and prosper, and leave markets when necessary.
- Marketing will serve an integral component of program development and enhancement, supported by a sophisticated market research effort. We will imply the very best market research to define and measure progress.

Advancement

The University will maintain a vigorous fund raising program across all our campuses that will be central to growth and prosperity. Such an effort will enable us to invest in our long-term needs, including specific programs, technology, and student scholarships.

- We will set and achieve fund raising targets that contribute significantly to the University's capital priorities, and we will work in cooperation with academic and operational leaders to keep these priorities in front of our prospective donors.
- Davis will establish a process for campus leaders to assist with local fund development. Advancement staff will work with campus leaders to coordinate fund raising priorities (technology, facilities, scholarships and special programs).
- We will actively pursue grant opportunities that support the programmatic and instructional needs of our students and our business partners.
- We will maintain an active information sharing and action plan for public policy advocacy and issues management that is supportive of independent higher education, student financial aid needs, charitable giving, and a business-friendly

environment. This will hinge on establishing and maintaining relationships with key elected officials and involving campus executives in the execution of tactics.

- We will operate a National Davis University Alumni Association that builds strong ties between alumni and Davis and increases contacts for fund raising and marketing.
- Davis will enhance student opportunities with an ongoing plan to improve the University's targeting and awarding of scholarships, including more generous criteria for awarding scholarships.

Finances

We will invest wisely to prosper, keeping a healthy bottom line without jeopardizing growth and essential support services necessary to recruit and retain students. Davis University will take calculated risks to finance and build the University.

- We will move beyond semester-tot-semester accounting by pursuing goals and strategies that will build a vibrant and prosperous university in the long term. Budgeting will be tied closely to strategic planning.
- We will build and employ an effective campus model that monitors student and operation performance and guides resource allocation.
- Davis will analyze academic programs relative to cost, revenue, and contribution to margin.
- We will employ an information management and cost accounting system to forecast, analyze past performance, and model future performance.
- A capital investment plan will guide the reinvestment of operating funds based upon the greatest opportunity for meeting student needs.

- We will develop a pricing strategy to allow us to compete more effectively in all our target markets.

Facilities

Davis University will offer a learning environment that is conducive to the success of our students. If we are delivering a practical business education, we must have the facilities and technology to accomplish this. Our facilities must be comfortable, attractive, and up-to-date technologically if we are to have a competitive edge in recruiting and retaining students.

- The quality of the learning environment will be assessed at all campuses, and a prototypical Davis classroom—designed to provide maximum flexibility, comfort, appropriate technology, and the best possible learning environment for students—will be defined.
- The Davis “look” will be consistent and ubiquitous across all campuses.
- We will prioritize investments in existing and new facilities based upon market research and growth prospects.

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