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SEAMLESS TRANSITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
PARTNERING TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE

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**SEAMLESS TRANSITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
PARTNERING TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE**

By

Gail L. Hoffman-Johnson

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ABSTRACT

SEAMLESS TRANSITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PARTNERING TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE

By

Gail L. Hoffman-Johnson

This study examines the collaborative process by which a premier engineering university sought to establish strategic partnerships with a select group of community colleges. Specifically, it focuses on the development and implementation of one strategic partnership in particular in which both the espoused and enacted common goal is to improve transition of students from the two-year to the four-year institution. Another important dimension involves ties not only between the institutions but also with business and industry largely due to the unique nature of the co-operative education component of the engineering university. Both institutions reside in the same economically ravaged city. Yet another dimension of the strategic partnership involves heightened levels of interaction with the surrounding community.

Although the literature speaks of the promise, as well as the challenges, of collaborative undertakings, it is virtually silent on clear definitions of the various forms. It is hoped that this study has provided at least the beginnings of a working definition of “strategic partnership.”

The study relies on case study methodology to examine the collaborative process. Interviews, direct observation, and document analysis yielded important insights into the nuances and intricacies of working together. In addition, the study utilizes negotiated order theory and Kanter’s model of innovation as theoretical frameworks for

understanding how the strategic partnership came about and how it might transfer to other contexts.

The key findings suggest that several factors contributed to the success of the collaborative effort: a significant environmental motive, shared perception about a common goal, the capacity to develop infrastructure through negotiation, the ability to create interdependence among stakeholders, the transformation of faculty as they began to develop a cosmopolitan attitude, and the centrality of a champion. Although the development and implementation of the collaborative model presents challenges, it also offers higher education faculty, administrators, and policymakers with the means by which to improve institutional effectiveness. By working together, institutions can better respond to the complex problems now facing higher education. The era of independence and institutional autonomy has passed. The collaborative model described within is built on interdependence and integration. It is hoped that lessons learned from one collaborative undertaking would be applied to others, thus creating an increasingly successful model for responding to the issues and challenges inherent in the current environment of higher education.

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**To my parents, Charles and Jaclyn Hoffman,
for your constant support and encouragement down through the years.**

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CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING THE TOPIC, PROBLEM, AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Background of the Problem

As we enter the 21st century, the concept of seamless education or seamless transition for students attending both two- and four-year colleges is becoming increasingly important. Our current economic climate, exacerbated by state and federal funding cuts for higher education, provides the impetus for identifying more efficient educational pathways for students seeking the baccalaureate degree. The result is referred to as *seamless education, or seamless transition*, as students cycle through various institutions of higher education. Ignash and Townsend refer to it as the “higher education pipeline” (Ignash & Townsend, 2000).

Higher education is faced with an ever-changing, competitive environment that is unprecedented. Enduring trends over the last century include proliferation of formal degree requirements for entry to employment in particular and the expansion of access to higher education in general (Brown, 2001). Competition for students, changing student demographics, and the recent economic downturn all promulgate a reconceptualization of the higher education system.

The trends of the last three decades underscore the necessity of new approaches to higher education. During the 1970s universities and colleges struggled in isolation as they attempted to meet growing demand by increasing access. In the 1980s the emphasis

on articulation encouraged them to explore issues of access and quality with each other. The 1990s then ushered in the decade of collaboration with a focus on more comprehensive partnerships. The trend shows no signs of abating in the early stages of the 21st century (Schaier-Peleg & Donovan, 1998).

Stakeholders including students, parents, faculty, administrators, policy makers, and the public at large are coming to realize that the concept of seamless transition, exemplified by transfer and articulation agreements as well as strategic partnerships, can increase systemic effectiveness and efficiency in educating the citizenry. Such collaborative agreements provide additional options for students and new opportunities for institutions but not without considerable investment of time, effort, and funds. Given this substantial investment of resources in an age of increased accountability and fiscal constraint, it becomes increasingly important to find ways to use higher education dollars wisely. Collaborative efforts, as evidenced by strategic partnerships, may well represent a wise use of those dollars, but we do not know for sure.

Developing these collaborative agreements is a time-intensive process involving representatives from both the two- and the four-year institution. Typically, college representatives include administrators involved in the transfer function, counselors well versed in issues pertaining to student success, and faculty who are knowledgeable about the curriculum at their respective institutions. Institutional requirements regarding basic skills (i.e., reading, writing, and mathematics), general education, and program of study must be considered at both the community college and the four-year college/university. It is not unusual for such agreements to take a year or longer to develop. Oftentimes,

travel is involved during the planning stages followed by a signing ceremony for the more unique arrangements.

While articulation and transfer agreements, one form of interinstitutional collaboration, have been in existence for well over a decade, strategic alliances are appearing on the higher education landscape in new and different forms. According to a recent piece in the *Changing Enterprise* paper series (2003),

The idea of strategic alliances has become fashionable. The term describes many collaborative projects, agreements, or relationships covering many different kinds of arrangements, from the provision of contract services to tight partnerships, and includes activities such as consortia, interinstitutional partnerships around research or teaching, dual degree programs, and exchange agreements, to name a few ("New times, new strategies: Curricular joint ventures," 2003).

Martin and Samels (2002) write convincingly about the movement of higher education toward strategic alliances. The salient advantage is that such agreements and affiliations are dynamic, not static, in that they are a fluid, temporary, focused set of understandings between two or more complementary learning institutions. As such, they can preserve the distinct missions and identities of the partnering institutions while at the same time combining their respective strengths to capitalize on market opportunities. The alliance can be formed only for the time period in which an educational program is in high demand and effective. As employer demands and student preferences shift, the alliance can be reshaped or dissolved.

A study of educational contributors to economic development identified partnerships as an appropriate vehicle. Specifically, it discusses the role operational partnerships, formed for specific projects, and strategic partnerships, designed to foster a

climate of collaboration, may play in economic development (Woolhouse & Cramphorn, 1999). Historically, however, colleges and universities have been afforded institutional autonomy and typically seek to preserve their independence. That fact notwithstanding, public demands for quality and accountability are factors that must be addressed.

Presently, fiscal constraints, increased competition, and market pressures are forcing administrators, institutional researchers, and faculty to operate in more collaborative cross-institutional arrangements. A recent study conducted for the Project on Managing Institutional Change and Transformation in Higher Education at the University of Michigan describes the formation of a ten-institution collaborative. Using a case study method involving interviews with institutional leaders and a review of documents related to the Kellogg Forum on Higher Education, the report offers several lessons: (1) The nature of academic work can keep institutions isolated and competing, not collaborating. (2) Semantic problems can serve as barriers, and ambiguous project and collaborative goals result in confusion. (3) Organizational structure and time demands can have a direct effect on the collaborative. The general conclusion is that any attempt to change institutions can be problematic. A reconceptualization of current practice on the part of key institutional actors is essential (Peterson & Anderson, 2001).

As a new form of organizational arrangement in this age of limited resources, strategic partnerships offer an attractive means for reducing redundancy and eliminating inefficiency. Effective, efficient higher education is imperative in preparing the citizenry to meet the economic and social challenges of the 21st century. According to Hearn and Holdsworth, "Meeting the needs of both postsecondary students and their prospective employers is critical to a state's

economic development and competitiveness, as well as its quality of life and its political, cultural, and civic health” (2002, p. 35).

Problem Statement

In this era of unparalleled fiscal constraint, it is imperative to identify ways in which to meet the needs of postsecondary students and their employers. Interinstitutional collaboration represents a way to reduce redundancy and duplication of courses and programs thus increasing effectiveness and efficiency.

Strategic partnerships, one form of interinstitutional collaboration, are emerging as one solution. As a relatively new organizational arrangement, we do not know much about them. In fact, as previously mentioned, they did not appear on the higher education landscape until the 1990s. Strategic partnerships offer many benefits, including new income streams as well as conserving resources and cutting costs.

Two- and four-year colleges and universities are increasingly recognizing the potential outcomes of strategic partnerships. Their dynamic and fluid nature offers an appealing way to address the needs of our complex, technology-driven society. Indeed they provide higher education faculty, administrators, and policy makers with attractive opportunities to increase organizational effectiveness and to respond to the challenges that institutions, through collaboration, can address with increased success.

However, the development of strategic partnerships among institutions is not without its challenges. Faculty and administrators must recognize factors in the external environment that could be addressed through collaborative efforts

among institutions. In addition, they must be willing to face the challenges that will inevitably arise due to internal conditions. Organizational culture and differences in mission, priorities, and perceptions contribute to the challenges faced in the initial phase of the partnership and later as working relationships are reevaluated and reconceptualized. Institutions experience a high demand on already strained resources both in the development as well as in the implementation of these strategic partnerships.

My interest was in studying the collaborative process as evidenced in a strategic partnership voluntarily undertaken by two disparate institutions as a means to reduce redundancy and increase effectiveness in higher education. To more fully understand this collaborative process, it became important to distinguish between alliances and partnerships in an attempt to situate the strategic partnership among the various types of collaborative undertakings. Since the literature does not provide a clear definition of a “strategic partnership” among institutions of higher education, I resorted to dictionary definitions as a starting point. The following provided a helpful framework for my study: (1) “alliance”: a union by relationship in qualities associated to further the common interests of members, (2) “partnership:” a relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities, and (3) “strategic”: of great importance within an integrated whole or to a planned effect (*Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 1996).

In combining the salient pieces of these definitions, I would offer the following definition as relevant for my study: *A strategic partnership is a legal relationship among parties having specified, joint rights and responsibilities as they work together to achieve common goals within an integrated whole.* I would suggest that the strategic piece, “of great importance within an integrated whole” is what is pertinent for my study. Alliances are far looser than strategic partnerships; strategic partnerships, on the other hand, are designed to develop an integrated educational structure to serve the needs not only of students, but also the institutions, area business and industry, and the surrounding communities.

Purpose of the Study

Institutions pursuing collaborative undertakings appear to be having success “although no definitive study has been performed to validate this view” (Fincher, 2002, p. 355). Similarly, Meehan-Merrill, Wiersma, Riffle, and Joy in writing about collaborative partnerships between educational organizations, mention the need for measuring such collaboration (2002). Why do disparate institutions voluntarily seek to work together? What issues and challenges do stakeholders face in the various stages of working together? Why do they continue to invest time and energy in the strategic partnership? What constitutes success? The purpose of this study is to understand this emerging form of interinstitutional collaboration to determine what fosters its development, what facilitates its implementation, what are the appropriate outcomes, and what are its measures of success.

Research Questions

Using documentary information, direct observation, and interviews, this study examined the conditions that contribute to strategic partnerships, the issues and challenges partnering institutions face, and why stakeholders continue to invest time and energy in the strategic partnership. I was interested in exploring the ways in which the stakeholders collaborate and negotiate to effectuate strategic partnerships. More specifically, I wanted to understand how the stakeholders come to understand the collaborative process involved in developing and implementing a strategic partnership. Gray's (1989) metaphor of *dynamic wholeness* as a new way of organizing suggests that our current ways of interacting stress independence and need to be complemented with models that "stress interdependence and complementarity" (p. 15). In essence, a new whole is created which is not reduceable to the sum of its parts.

This study was designed to describe how stakeholders perceive the process of developing and implementing a strategic partnership and subsequently determine whether it is working or not. The following four questions provided a framework for exploration:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?
3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?

4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together? (This assessment will be made to the extent possible given that the strategic partnership included in this study will have been in existence for only two years.)

Conceptual Framework

Negotiated order theory provides a helpful framework for examining the process by which two- and four-year institutions voluntarily came together to develop and implement a strategic partnership that results in a seamless pathway for students in pursuit of various baccalaureate degrees.

The perceived need, to form a strategic partnership to better meet the needs of higher education and ultimately society, encourages collaboration between institutions. Although collaboration can be viewed as the strategy to effectuate the partnership, a framework, or theoretical perspective, for approaching the negotiation inherent in the collaborative undertaking is necessary.

Strauss's (1978) negotiated order theory is helpful in providing that theoretical perspective. In his seminal work, *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes, and Social Order*, he discusses negotiation as "one of the possible means of 'getting things accomplished'" (1978, p. 234). He explains that negotiation is not just one human process or activity but rather is of major importance in human affairs. Studying negotiation is akin to studying social orders. In fact, Strauss defines social order as negotiated order: "In the organizations studied, apparently there could be no organizational relationships without accompanying negotiations" (1978, p. 5).

Negotiated order theory thus provides a valuable perspective from which to view the process used in the development of strategic partnerships, as well as a helpful lens for

assessing how partnering institutions deal with the ongoing issues inherent in these collaborative undertakings. As institutions come together to form strategic partnerships, it would be helpful to know the significance of effective negotiations during the problem-setting, direction-setting, and implementation phases. Especially given that strategic partnerships are designed to be fluid, not static, and capable of evolving as needed, an approach such as that of negotiated order theory should be eminently informative. Certainly, Strauss's (1978) assertion that negotiation accompanies organizational relationships offers a helpful framework from which to assess the development and implementation of strategic partnerships among institutions of higher education.

Significance of the Study

Higher education is facing unprecedented challenges. The recent economic downturn, competition for students, and changing funding patterns are encouraging new approaches not the least of which are various forms of interinstitutional collaboration. Some collaborative efforts develop into a deeper relationship, i.e., a strategic partnership, in which partnering institutions seek mutual satisfaction of self-interests (Wilbur, 1996). Strategic partnerships extend far beyond traditional articulation agreements. Not only do institutions collaborate in establishing course equivalencies and program pathways, they also collaborate in student advising, facilities use, and promotion efforts. According to Fincher, "The arrangement is such that the two institutions are partners and not competitors" (2002, p. 356).

Another factor, in addition to those associated with our changing, turbulent environment, is contributing to partnering of two- and four-year institutions. Increasingly, students are attempting to transfer with nonliberal arts courses or programs.

The transfer function historically associated with community colleges included the freshman and sophomore years, culminating in an associate of arts or an associate of science degree. The successful student was then accorded full junior status at the four-year institution.

Now, however, students in occupational programs are seeking efficient pathways to the baccalaureate degree that did not formerly exist. These career programs typically result in an associate in applied science, or nontransfer degree (Townsend, 2001). As students experience success in attaining the associate degree, and because career enhancement typically requires additional credentialing, students become motivated to achieve additional education. Hence the need for ensuring seamless transition for this new population of students arises.

Strategic partnerships offer the means by which institutions could collaborate to provide appropriate pathways for educating students to meet emerging economic and social needs. Institutions, though, have limited experience with collaborative efforts as broad and all encompassing as strategic partnerships. Stein and Short (2001) mention the barriers created by limited institutional experience with collaboration in degree-program design and delivery. Specifically, they mention “the lack of precedents for effective cross-campus collaboration” (p. 422) and that few role models have been able to withstand the test of time.

As an emerging entity with the possibility of addressing many of the concerns facing higher education today, strategic partnerships warrant in-depth review. However, very little research has been conducted on collaborative efforts in higher education. According to Stein and Short:

Relatively little empirical work exists on the delivery of collaborative academic-degree programs. As a result, empirically based insights into collaboration among institutions of higher education are sparse. Decision makers and planners need a good understanding of what collaboration is, when and why it works well, and reasons why it does not succeed (2001, p. 418).

This study will provide much needed information about the factors that encourage the development and implementation of strategic partnerships, the issues and challenges faced by key constituents, and the outcomes that may be used as measures of success.

Research Paradigm and Assumptions

Since my study is exploratory, the qualitative paradigm is appropriate. Creswell (2003), in establishing a framework for design, suggests that we consider four items in designing a research proposal. I found it helpful to situate my study as follows: (1) Epistemology (theory of knowledge embedded in the philosophical stance) – Subjectivism, not objectivism, will inform my research. (2) Philosophical stance (perspective lying behind the methodology in questions) – Socially constructed knowledge claims are inherent in my study for the goal of the research will be to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of strategic partnerships. (3) Methodology (strategy or plan of action that links methods to outcomes) – Case study design will govern my choice and use of methods. Additionally, since a case study does not require control of behavioral events but does focus on contemporary events (Yin, 2003), it is an appropriate strategy for examining the research problem that I have studied. (4) Methods (techniques and procedures) – Since qualitative research methods allow information to emerge from participants, I used interviews, direct observation, and document data.

Strategic partnerships represent a new form of organizational arrangement about which we know very little. To begin to understand what they are, how they work, and why they might be worthwhile undertakings, a detailed discussion of a recently developed strategic partnership between a premier engineering university and a state-supported community college will be presented. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure anonymity.

An Example of a Strategic Partnership between a Private Engineering University and a State-Supported Community College

These two Midwestern institutions sought to develop and implement a strategic partnership designed to customize education for students pursuing a baccalaureate degree. Although an articulation agreement had been in place for over a decade, campus leaders at Barone University and Misaba Community College sought to strengthen that relationship. The goal was to improve mechanisms for student support and thereby enhance access to careers in applied mathematics, applied physics, business, engineering, and environmental chemistry.

Desirous of expanding the traditional articulation agreement into a more encompassing strategic partnership, top-level administrators and an organizational consultant representing Barone approached campus leaders at Misaba in January 2003. Perceiving the advantages such an interorganizational arrangement could provide students, and ultimately employers, the two institutions established an aggressive timeline, resulting in a signing ceremony for the strategic partnership nine months later.

The institutions reside in a planning agency state. Thus no state-level mandate provided the impetus for exploring the strategic partnership. Instead, university officials determined that the formation of strategic partnerships with carefully selected community

colleges could provide important benefits to several stakeholders. Not only would these benefits accrue to the university, but also to the participating community college, surrounding communities, employers, and, most important, to students themselves. The fact that these two institutions voluntarily sought to partner is especially salient in light of the fact that Barone is a four-year private institution, whereas Misaba is a two-year public institution.

As mentioned above, the strategic partnership was memorialized with a formal signing ceremony less than nine months after the problem-setting phase was initiated. At that ceremony, both college presidents spoke about the unique opportunities such a collaborative undertaking provided. Typically, articulation agreements alone can take longer to complete; we can assume, therefore, that there was incentive on both sides to bring the partnership to timely fruition. It thus becomes beneficial to examine the nature of the two institutions in an attempt to identify the factors that played a role in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership.

In its 2002-2003 catalog, Barone University, located in an economically ravaged city in the Midwest, offers the following mission statement:

Barone University is an independent degree-granting college specializing in closely-coupled cooperative education at the baccalaureate level. The University offers undergraduate programs in engineering, management, applied sciences and mathematics—and it provides innovative and responsive graduate level and continuing education programs for resident students and working professionals. Barone's mission is to serve society by preparing technical and managerial leaders (*Barone University: Undergraduate baccalaureate programs 2002-2003*, 2002).

First accredited in 1962 by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Barone is considered one of the nation's premier co-operative institutions and is ranked as one of the country's top engineering institutions by *U. S. News and World Report*.

Misaba College, one of five community colleges with which it sought to partner, serves a tri-county area. It too has been in existence for over 40 years and is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission, A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. It offers the following mission statement:

Our mission is to be an innovative and responsive community college dedicated to meeting the diverse educational and personal growth needs of our students by providing excellent learning opportunities and support services (*Misaba College catalog*, 2003-2004).

It is important to remember that these two institutions voluntarily decided to form the strategic partnership. They exist in a state system that encourages, but does not mandate, open communication and collaboration. Examination of the perceived partnership benefits from the perspective of all stakeholders should be informative. These anticipated benefits were outlined in a strategic partnership document that was a product of the articulation committee of a design and manufacturing alliance. A consortium of universities, community colleges, high school districts, and employers, the members of the consortium were committed to developing an integrated educational structure to meet the needs of the design and manufacturing industry of this Midwestern state (Varty & Nichols, 2002).

Not unexpectedly, many benefits accrue to Barone University. One benefit is the ability to refer interested, but academically underprepared or financially unable, students to Misaba College where they would receive special attention and support as they prepare for eventual transfer to Barone. Another benefit is that the partnership would introduce Barone to new communities and to their employers, resulting in more diversification of students and employer sponsors.

Benefits also accrue to Misaba College. Typical of community colleges, it is interested in the successful transfer of its students to the university of their choice. However, because clear information about transfer is typically not available, it is often difficult for the community college to facilitate that transition. Too often students lose credits in transfer, a situation now exacerbated by the increasing trend of students to attend multiple institutions in their pursuit of the baccalaureate degree (i.e., “swirling”). Articulation agreements alone do not solve all of the problems community college students often encounter when transferring. However, a strategic partnership between the university and the community college that includes careful advising as well as other forms of student support can address issues of academic as well as social integration in ensuring student success.

Employers benefit as well. Some will learn of the Barone co-operative education program for the first time. A particular strength of the Barone-Misaba strategic partnership is that both institutions have exemplary co-op programs. Some employers, especially those situated in areas with a shortage of engineers, may utilize this partnership to recruit local, talented students who desire to remain in the community and fill critical positions in their companies upon graduation from Barone.

Most important, students benefit as well. Rather than being denied admission to Barone, they can be offered realistic alternatives to prepare them for eventual admission. Through careful advising they can take the requisite science and math courses at Misaba College. While attending Misaba, they can save money toward their Barone education. Additionally, they may begin a co-op relationship in the tri-county area served by Misaba. Since the two institutions are only 50 miles apart, that co-op position could very

likely serve as their Barone sponsor. Perhaps that company would even support them financially once admitted to Barone.

Benefits to both institutions, the surrounding community including employers, and students thus recognized, the characteristics of a strategic partnership should be identified. These characteristics were listed in a concept paper from an organizational consultant to a top-level administrator at Barone (Varty, 2002). The characteristics and the way they were operationalized at Misaba follow:

1. **Support of academic leaders at both institutions.** Both college presidents, as well as other senior academic officers, student and educational support personnel, and co-op coordinators were involved in developing the partnership.
2. **Appointment of a Barone liaison who would work with a designated Misaba staff person.** Misaba College has identified persons in Admissions, Articulation, and the Counseling & Advising Center to inform and support students interested in transfer to Barone. They work in concert with the Barone liaison.
3. **Identification of a Barone staff member and perhaps Barone alumni who are available to talk with students interested in transfer to Barone.**

Organized efforts are underway in which a Barone admissions person speaks to Misaba students in co-op, pre-engineering, upper-level mathematics, and physics classes. Barone regularly hosts open houses for interested students and their parents.

4. **Assistance in relevant co-op assignments.** (As previously mentioned, a unique strength of the Barone-Misaba partnership is that both institutions have strong, well-established co-op programs.) Ideally, the same local employer would function as the student's sponsor at both Misaba and at Barone. Adonis Automotive, located midway between the two institutions, presently functions in this capacity.
5. **Awarding of scholarships.** Perhaps in conjunction with sponsoring employers, Barone could award a scholarship to an outstanding community college graduate each year. An employer-community relations team is being formed to explore opportunities related to this initiative.
6. **Signing a formal agreement outlining the strategic partnership.** Misaba College and Barone University signed "A Statement of Strategic Partnership between Misaba College and Barone University" on September 9, 2003, subject to review every two years. The previously existing articulation agreement became an addendum.

To summarize, strategic partnerships began appearing on the higher education landscape in the 1990s. Designed to do more than just articulate programs, they involve issues of social as well as academic integration to ensure student success. Institutions are now embracing them in record numbers because of the many perceived advantages. However, we do not know much about their ultimate potential for successfully meeting the challenges that they are designed to address. An early exploratory study, such as this one, could provide valuable information about the worthiness of these new entities. The strategic partnership included in my case study will have been in place for two years

when I gather my data. Although two years does not represent an extended period of time, it should be adequate to begin making informed observations about the value of strategic partnerships as a means for improving effectiveness and efficiency in higher education.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature yields a plethora of articles, reports, and studies addressing issues inherent in the concept of seamless education. Increasingly, in this age of drastic budget shortfalls, the trend is toward interinstitutional collaborative efforts, such as strategic partnerships, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the undergraduate experience.

Several sources of literature inform the conceptualization of this study. The first body of literature is drawn from the research on transfer students. These studies include, but are not limited to, discussion of transfer function, student transfer behavior, and new patterns often referred to as “swirling.” A second body of literature is drawn from the literature on collaboration as a strategy that institutions are using to meet the numerous challenges currently facing higher education. Lastly, a third body of literature is drawn from negotiated order theory, as “a model of collaborative organizational behavior” (Wilbur, 1996). This theory provides a valuable perspective from which to view the process used in the development of strategic partnerships as well as a helpful lens for assessing how partnering institutions negotiate the ongoing issues inherent in these collaborative undertakings.

Challenges Presented by Transfer Students

The literature on transfer students, historical in nature, traces the evolution of the public junior colleges into the public comprehensive community colleges in existence

today. A common thread identifiable in the literature is the unexpected change in transfer patterns of students pursuing the baccalaureate degree.

Seamless transition attempts to ease transfer among and between two- and four-year colleges and universities. Kintzer and Wattenbarger, as quoted in Ignash and Townsend (2000), define transfer as “the mechanics of credit, course, and curriculum exchange.” Historically, the public junior colleges had transfer education as their central mission. Students took the first two years of their undergraduate education at the two-year institution and then transferred to the four-year institution to complete their baccalaureate degree. Typically, they attained the Associate of Arts (A.A.) Degree or the more specialized Associate of Science (A.S.) Degree. The underlying assumption was that students transferred in one direction only and that was upward (Townsend, 2001).

Public junior colleges have evolved into the comprehensive community colleges in existence today. Transfer education, defined by the National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer, 1990, as “the capacity of community...colleges to assist students in the transition to a four-year college or university” is still the primary mission (cited in Townsend, 2001). What has changed, though, are the current transfer patterns of students in pursuit of the baccalaureate degree. No longer can it be assumed that they will complete the associate’s degree and then transfer to the four-year institution. As discussed by Townsend (2001), unanticipated transfer patterns can be categorized into two groups: (1) Students who begin their post-secondary education at the community college and (2) Students who begin their education at the four-year institution. Among students who begin at the community college, some will transfer before completing the A.A. or A.S. degree; some will transfer with an Associate in Applied Science (i.e., an

A.A.S. in an occupational program) or with courses not considered general education; and some move back and forth between various two- and four-year institutions. Several researchers have documented this multiple-transfer phenomenon. The increase in the percentage of students attending more than one two- and/or four-year public and/or private college has been labeled as “swirling,” “drop downs” or reverse transfers, and “double-reverse transfer” (cited in Townsend, 2001).

Changing demographics among the student population also presents challenges for higher education. The number of students 25 and older has been increasing at unprecedented rates with the result that early in the 21st century, the majority of American college and university students will be over the age of 25. This represents a challenge for higher education institutions because they are not accustomed to students who are working adults with families pursuing education on a part-time basis. Traditionally, these students were marginalized as “nontraditional,” “night school,” or “continuing education” students; no longer can public institutions continue to ignore them. Instead they will need to deliver high quality academic programs, designed to meet their special needs (Langenberg, 1999).

Thus it can be said that the transfer function as originally conceived has evolved from its original upward only direction into one that is more aptly described as swirling among and between two- and four-year institutions. Effective and efficient transfer, in which students do not have to repeat courses in their quest for the baccalaureate degree, becomes more complex. One solution, notably evident in the 1980s, involved articulation of various courses and programs between community colleges and four-year

institutions. More comprehensive partnerships evolved during the 1990s, the decade of collaboration (Schaier-Peleg & Donovan, 1998).

Significance for This Study

Higher education is facing unprecedented challenges at the advent of the 21st century. Technology, the economy, and globalization all contribute to the turbulent environment in which institutions of higher education are situated. Since very few jobs do not now require some level of training and education, the need for post-secondary education has never been greater and is only expected to increase. Issues of access can thus be added to the mix. The challenge for higher education is not only to provide access to those that formerly did not pursue a baccalaureate degree, but also to provide programs capable of meeting the constantly changing needs of society.

The issues facing transfer students deserve careful scrutiny. By focusing attention on ways to ease their traverse of the higher education system, we can do much to reduce redundancy and avoid duplication of courses and programs. Increasingly, programs are combining a vocational orientation with general education as policy makers and higher education leaders realize the importance of preparing well-rounded graduates capable of meeting the challenges of contemporary society.

Institutions must work collectively in an effort to provide undergraduates with excellent learning experiences if they are to be socially responsible, lifelong learners. As fiscal conditions continue to tighten, policy makers are increasingly demanding that institutions concentrate more on undergraduate education. Several aspects of academic programming can influence undergraduate student learning, especially in light of the transfer patterns referred to earlier. In this age of fiscal constraint, it is imperative that

institutions collaborate not only to ensure transferability of credits but also to go beyond simple course and program articulation to ensure the smooth transition of students. Collaboration, as a strategic response, offers a means for better integration of higher education institutions to meet changing societal needs.

Collaboration as a Strategy

As we enter the 21st century, institutions of higher education around the world face the increasing problem of relevance. The international economy is evolving toward a global network organized around the value of knowledge. As a result, the capacity of organizations and people to use technology effectively, efficiently, and wisely has emerged as a critical societal concern. Colleges and universities are being called upon to take a proactive role in shaping a positive future. To do so they must transform their structures, processes, and programs in an effort to be more flexible and more responsive to changing societal needs (Hanna, 2003).

Unquestionably, higher education must change to meet the demands of an increasingly complex, dynamic environment. As a strategic response, higher education institutions are being called upon to work in more collaborative cross-institutional arrangements. A number of different organizational arrangements have appeared in the literature during the last decade. Viewed along a continuum of informality to formality, they include alliances, networks, cooperatives, consortia, joint-ventures, collaborations, and partnerships. Differing on a number of dimensions, including purpose, goal-consensus, perception of ownership, willingness to impact the other's culture, and longevity, they all represent strategies used by organizations to deal with a turbulent environment (Wilbur, 1996).

All kinds of higher education institutions have built expanded alliances with one another as well as with the corporate sector. These alliances are vital business strategies; as such, colleges and universities will strive to expand their web of alliances with others to ensure their survivability in the turbulent times ahead. Not only is demand for learning increasing and access to higher education improving, but also competition is growing. This competition will force institutions to concentrate on their unique programmatic advantages. Cooperation to compete will increasingly be seen as a critical strategy for higher education institutions in the foreseeable future (Hanna, 2003).

Woolhouse and Crampton, in a study of educational contributors to economic development, identified strategic partnerships, designed to foster a climate of collaboration, as one important contributor. Specifically, they discussed a three-stage process to enable the creation of a culture of enterprise and learning: (1) identify priority issues, (2) assess capabilities, and (3) analyze effectiveness (1999). Collaborations, as evidenced by strategic partnerships, are the focus of this study. According to Wilbur,

Collaboration involves a fairly giant step beyond alliances, networks, cooperatives, consortia, and joint ventures. In a collaborative relationship, institutions work together, as equals, to achieve mutual goals. The organizational features of collaborative projects are characterized by shared decision-making, open and frequent communication, exchange of resources, and consensus on goals (1996, p. 22).

Not only is collaboration about joint effort, but also it is about joint ownership of results. Linden, in discussing collaboration as the focus of many organization change efforts in the first decade of the 21st century, offers a helpful context for understanding collaboration:

Collaboration occurs when people from different organizations or units within the same organization produce something through shared effort,

resources, and decision making and then take joint ownership of the final product or service (2003, p. 8).

Martin and Samels, formerly proponents of educational mergers, now advocate strategic alliances as a response to the recent economic downturn. They define strategic alliances as a temporary, fluid, focused set of covenants between two or more complementary learning institutions or a learning institution and a business organization. By their very nature, these agreements can preserve the distinct missions of each institution as they take advantage of market opportunities by combining their respective strengths. The agreement need only be in place as long as it is effective and in high demand. As employer demand and student preferences change, the agreement can be updated if appropriate or dissolved if no longer of value (2002).

As a relatively new organizational arrangement, the conceptualization of collaborative efforts varies widely; and little consensus on core characteristics has emerged. To some, collaboration means little more than cross listing courses among institutions or joining two or more separate degrees. To others, collaboration entails new thinking, new forms of communication, and new structures. Regardless of how it is conceptualized, collaboration involves ambiguity and complexity (Stein & Short, 2001).

Ambiguity and complexity inevitably accompany systemic change. Additionally, systemic change is slow and not without its challenges, especially in higher education. Although collaboration on research across disciplines is fairly common, it is less so in teaching. Teaching has traditionally been rather solitary and less responsive to collaborative efforts. However, faculty input is essential for effective strategic partnerships.

Stein and Short (2001) illuminate many of the challenges to collaborative endeavors: (1) Negative faculty attitudes including criticism, suspicion, and competition, (2) Personal barriers resulting from a lack of interpersonal skills and style, and (3) Structural barriers such as inflexible policies and procedures governing faculty workload, campus reward structures, and policies on residency requirements.

The challenges that institutions face as they attempt to make sustainable and systemic changes notwithstanding, meaningful collaboration offers a multitude of benefits. Martin and Samels suggest that through effective affiliations institutions can:

1. Preserve educational missions
2. Strengthen and enrich fundamental objectives
3. Maintain academic-governance systems
4. Create new income streams
5. Save resources and cut costs
6. Provide new opportunities for teaching and research (2002, pp. 2-3).

Implications for This Study

Unprecedented challenges have appeared on the higher education landscape. It is clear from the literature that higher education institutions will need to foster new organizational arrangements in an effort to prepare an educated citizenry positioned to survive and thrive in the 21st century. Cooperation to compete is a critical strategy that institutions would be wise to embrace as they attempt to meet these challenges. This study explored the factors that encourage collaborative efforts, such as strategic partnerships, as well as the issues and challenges institutions face in the development and implementation of these partnerships.

Negotiated Order Theory as a Framework

Although our contemporary climate is one that increasingly promotes greater collaboration among institutions of higher education, faculty and administrators typically find themselves in unfamiliar territory. Autonomy, the hallmark of academe, typically encourages competition, not collaboration. It is one thing to promote collaboration and quite another to implement it, to say nothing of a full partnership built on shared vision, support, and commitment from all stakeholders (Stein & Short, 2001).

Collaborative efforts, as evidenced by strategic partnerships, make intuitive good sense. It follows that a framework to encourage their development and implementation would be infinitely worthwhile. A comprehensive integration of higher education institutions, designed to be highly responsive to the needs of contemporary society, requires ongoing negotiation. This study explored critical interactions within and among institutions desirous of collaborating as an attempt to meet the unprecedented challenges facing higher education today.

Negotiated order theory (Gray, 1989; Strauss, 1978) provides an informative framework for examining and analyzing the process by which institutions of higher education may come together to form strategic partnerships. According to Strauss (1978) social order is negotiated order. He proposes that “negotiation has generally stood for one of the possible means of ‘getting things accomplished’ when parties need to deal with each other to get those things done” (1978, p. 234). Certainly, institutions of higher education need to work with each other, that is, collaborate, if they are to build strategic partnerships. Interactions between faculty and administrators within and among institutions create and recreate the social order. Social orders are formed through a

process of negotiation and must be continually reinstantiated if they are to be viewed as a stable organizational structure (Medved & Heisler, 2002).

In addressing the issue of social orders as negotiated orders, Strauss maintains that to conceptualize about organizations, groups, and institutions, one must also analyze their implied negotiation processes. In analyzing several negotiation cases drawn from various research publications, he utilized a paradigm that included both a structural context as well as a negotiation context. The structural context refers to both the external environment and the internal organization within which the negotiation takes place. The negotiation context “refers specifically to the structural properties entering very directly as conditions into the course of the negotiation itself” (1978, pp. 237-238).

According to Strauss, any negotiation context will exhibit some combination of the following properties:

1. The number of negotiators, their relative experience in negotiating, and whom they represent.
2. Whether the negotiations are one-shot, repeated, sequential, serial, multiple, or linked.
3. The relative balance of power exhibited by the respective parties in the negotiation itself.
4. The nature of their respective stakes in the negotiation.
5. The visibility of transactions to others; that is, their overt or covert characters.
6. The number and complexity of the issues negotiated.
7. The clarity of legitimacy boundaries of the issues negotiated.
8. The options to avoiding or discontinuing negotiation; that is, the alternative modes of action perceived as available (1978, p. 238).

He suggests that researchers choose from this list those properties that will be relevant for their studies.

Strauss provided a helpful conceptualization of negotiated order as social order and encouraged us to work toward development of a theory of negotiation. Gray (1989), building on the work of Strauss and other theorists, does just that with her conceptualization: negotiated order theory.

Gray describes a process-oriented approach for dealing with the complex problems inherent in our turbulent environment. Observing that many of our problems seem unsolvable because our conceptions of how to function in an increasingly interconnected world are limited, she offers a different approach for achieving creative solutions. She encourages us to view problems from perspectives outside of our own and to redesign our problem-solving strategies to include the various stakeholders that have an interest in the issue.

Gray offers collaboration as the viable strategy for dealing with the difficult problems faced by contemporary society. As she states,

It essentially provides a framework for approaching problems and searching for solutions. However, collaboration itself is not the solution. To put it simply, collaboration is a process in which those parties with a stake in the problem actively seek a mutually determined solution. They join forces, pool information, knock heads, construct alternative solutions, and forge an agreement (1989, p. xviii).

Although her focus is on collaboration as a method for solving interorganizational problems, the issues typically involve multiple parties and cut across many sectors of society. Oftentimes, the solutions achieved are far ranging, benefiting not only the organizations involved but also the larger society as well.

Building on the premise that in order to move the negotiation process forward we must know where we are in that process, Gray outlines a three-phase model of collaboration. It is predicated on the assumption that a fundamental set of issues must be addressed during the course of any collaboration. Depending on the nature of the particular collaboration, some phases may take on more significance than others. Her model of the collaborative process includes three major phases: (1) problem setting, (2) direction setting, and (3) implementation.

The problem-setting phase, often the most difficult, involves getting the key players to the table so that face-to-face discussion may begin. Often referred to as pre-negotiation, this phase includes the following salient issues: (1) Common definition of the problem – This step is essential, for if it is not accomplished subsequent efforts to collaborate are likely to fail. (2) Commitment to collaborate – The parties need to recognize the potential for positive gain through joint exploration of the problem, once it is agreed upon. (3) Identification of the stakeholders – Multiple sources of information are essential to promote as complete an understanding of the problem as possible. Thus who is invited to the table holds serious implications for the outcome of the collaboration. (4) Legitimacy of the stakeholders – Those with a perceived right as well as the needed capacity to participate is an important part of the process. (5) Convener characteristics – Since the role of the convener (an individual or an organization) is to identify and bring all legitimate stakeholders to the table, persuasive powers are important. (6) Identification of resources – Typically, the parties involved in this pre-negotiation phase will incur costs; these must be anticipated and secured so that stakeholders may participate equally in the process.

The tasks identified in the problem-setting phase above (i.e., pre-negotiation) are essential preconditions for the next phase, direction setting. In this phase, the negotiation phase, stakeholders identify the issues that brought them together, discuss similarities and differences in these interests, and analyze the potential for eventual trade-offs. The following components comprise the direction-setting phase: (1) Establishing the ground rules – Vital to this phase, ground rules are important for removing uncertainty about appropriate behavior for interaction and for lessening the likelihood of misunderstandings. (2) Agenda setting – The substantive issues of the collaboration need to be established in a way that makes the stakeholders feel their interests are adequately reflected. (3) Organizing subgroups – Since the organization of the collaborative process affects the promotion of consensus, it may be advantageous to form subgroups if the number of agenda items or stakeholders is large. (4) Joint information search – This task may be necessary if stakeholders realize that they do not have sufficient data or are working from very different sources of data. (5) Exploring options – Since it is unlikely that a single option will be equally acceptable to all parties, it is important to explore multiple options before foreclosing on any one in particular. (6) Reaching agreement and closing the deal – All of the stakeholders commit to a single option or to a package of options. Typically, agreements are finalized in writing with which some may take exception. Since this often reopens the deliberations, participants should be prepared for a temporary setback.

Because carefully developed agreements can fall apart after the parties have forged an agreement, careful attention must be devoted to the final stage, that of implementation. The issues important for successful implementation include the

following: (1) Dealing with constituencies – Parties to the agreement must carefully explain to “back home” stakeholders the rationale for any tradeoffs and strive to garner their support for the final agreement. (2) Building external support – Because those who forged the agreement are often not those charged with implementation, it is essential to obtain the support of those who will actually be involved in implementing the agreement. (3) Structuring – Stakeholders must pay careful attention to the extent of effort needed for successful implementation; they would be wise to consider the initial impetus for the collaboration as well as the degree of organizational change required. (4) Monitoring the agreement and ensuring compliance – Stakeholders’ compliance with the agreement needs to be periodically assessed; any issues of noncompliance should be addressed. Changed circumstances may necessitate re-negotiation of certain aspects of the agreement.

In conceptualizing collaboration as a negotiated order, Gray maintains that “negotiated order refers to a social context in which relationships are negotiated and renegotiated. The social order is shaped through the self-conscious interaction of participants” (1989, p. 228). Organizations are viewed as fluid and dynamic, comprised of members with changing webs of interaction who must work constantly at some kind of order. No longer are organizations viewed as fixed, rigid entities constrained by rules, regulations, and hierarchical chains of command.

Gray applies this conception of negotiated order theory to interorganizational transactions. Collectively, a group of organizations can negotiate agreements to govern their interactions. Collaboration then provides the mechanism by which information can be shared to effectuate those agreements. However, collectively forging an agreement

that is satisfactory to multiple stakeholders involves considerable negotiation. Stakeholders must appreciate the necessity of joint activity, agree on a common definition of the problem, and decide how they will collaborate before they can begin to address the substantive issues at hand. Further, they must agree on the scope and quality of information to be shared and, once negotiations are underway, continually assess whether the information they exchange is sufficient.

When collaboration is conceptualized as negotiated interorganizational order, several points are emphasized. (1) Stakeholders collaborate to collectively construct strategies to deal with the turbulent environment. (2) These interorganizational arrangements are emergent and exploratory in nature; as collaborations, these dynamic negotiations may eventually lead to some type of institutionalized agreement. (3) Collaborations, in serving as quasi-institutional mechanisms for coordinating interorganizational relations, represent a new institutional form whose legitimacy is still in the process of negotiation. (4) Collaborations can serve as vehicles for action learning whereby management is reframed from the traditional function of control to one that facilitates colearning to more effectively cope with unpredictability and uncertainty.

Gray's conceptualization of negotiated order theory seems to provide an inherently valuable framework with practical application for a variety of problems facing contemporary society. Eric Trist, Emeritus Professor of Social Systems Sciences at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, offers the following words of praise:

Barbara Gray's book offers by far the most comprehensive and systematic treatment yet to be attempted of the whole set of issues in the field of collaboration. Her book will, in my view, fundamentally influence the field's future in both theory and practice. This is high praise, but I believe most readers who seriously study this book will agree with me, whatever their criticisms or reservations (Foreword, Gray, 1989, p. xiii).

Implications for This Study

I have drawn from Strauss's list (p. 28) those properties that are informative for my study. It is important to examine the negotiation context in light of how the strategic partnership developed; how it evolved; and how it is working, or not. I have also utilized Gray's framework on collaborating to examine and analyze the process by which a private, premier engineering university and a public two-year community college sought to partner.

In summary, three bodies of literature inform this study. First, the literature on transfer students is helpful in illuminating the issues and challenges faced by undergraduates in their traverse of the higher education system. Recognition of the plethora of challenges faced by transfer students provides a rationale for studying strategic partnerships and other processes that may make the transfer process more effective. These issues and challenges are further exacerbated by the changing economic and political context in which higher education institutions find themselves. Specifically, a shrinking economy, rising college costs, and changing demographics promulgate collaborative efforts among institutions as a strategic response.

The second body of literature examines collaboration as a strategy by which institutions may effectively meet the challenges facing higher education. Strategic partnerships, one form of collaboration, are increasingly appearing on the higher education landscape. As a new organizational arrangement offering much promise for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education, we do not know much about them. Designed to provide greater integration of higher education institutions that

are more responsive to complex societal needs, strategic partnerships involve numerous interactions within and among institutions.

Negotiated order theory, the third body of literature selected to inform this study, provides a helpful framework from which to assess the negotiation process inherent in the development, implementation, and initial assessment of strategic partnerships. The initial perceived need to collaborate, as a means to survive in the competitive environment facing higher education, to the actual signing of a strategic partnership takes an inordinate amount of time, effort, and energy within and among institutions. To date, little is known about the success of this new form of organizational arrangement. This exploratory study was designed to help fill that gap in the literature and extend the body of knowledge about partnering as a strategic response to the challenges facing higher education at the beginning of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

A review of the literature reveals that students are attempting to traverse the higher education system in unprecedented ways as they seek novel pathways to the baccalaureate degree. This phenomenon, combined with the recent economic downturn and the complexities inherent in our technological age, is forcing higher education to transform in order to survive. As an adaptive response to these challenges, institutions are cooperating to compete, a strategy Graves identifies as “collabotition.” Additionally, Hague has suggested that the key is permeability and that the question is not whether to form alliances, but rather to choose between alliance or annihilation (Hanna, 2003).

As institutions seek to collaborate as a strategy to meet the above-mentioned challenges, it becomes important to have a framework through which to view the interactions within and among those institutions. Negotiated order theory provides such a framework, or perspective, through which to examine the smaller-scale negotiations that occur among individuals as well as the larger-scale negotiations that occur among organizations (Fine, 1984).

Strategic partnerships, one form of interinstitutional collaboration, are a new form of organizational arrangement about which we know very little. Although the benefits appear to be numerous, we do not know much the outcomes of strategic partnerships. Collaboration between and among educational institutions is discussed extensively and

often required by funding agencies, but the literature is virtually silent on assessing such collaboration (Meehan-Merrill et al., 2002). Similarly, Stein and Short comment as follows: "...empirically based insights into collaboration among institutions of higher education are sparse. Decision makers and planners need a good understanding of what collaboration is, when and why it works well, and reasons why it does not succeed" (2001, p. 418).

This research study sought to fill that gap in the literature by answering the following four research questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?
3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?
4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together? (This assessment will be made to the extent possible given that the strategic partnership included in this study will have been in existence for only two years.)

Since my study is exploratory in nature, the qualitative paradigm is appropriate. As mentioned previously, I found it helpful to use Creswell's (2003) framework for design. Specifically, (1) subjectivism, not objectivism, informed my research. (2) Socially constructed knowledge claims were inherent in my study for the goal of the research was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of strategic partnerships. (3) Case study design governed my choice and use of methods. (4) Since

qualitative research methods allow information to emerge from participants, I have used document data, direct observation, and interviews.

Creswell (2003) suggests that qualitative researchers choose from among five strategies of inquiry, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. Because my research questions focus on the *why* and *how* rather than on the *what* and the *where*, the case study approach represented an appropriate design. Additionally, since a case study does not require control of behavioral events but does focus on contemporary events, it was an appropriate strategy for examining the research problem that I am studying. Specifically, a case study approach was used to illustrate various topics in a descriptive mode while following a set of pre-specified procedures (Yin, 2003).

Data Sources

As mentioned in Chapter 1, institutional identity is concealed through the use of pseudonyms. An integral component of the Barone University approach to student recruitment was the identification and creation of strategic partnerships with a select group of community colleges both within and outside this Midwestern state. Potential partners were selected from already successful areas of student recruitment where Barone conceivably could strengthen those recruitment efforts. Additionally, the academic leaders of those potential partners needed to demonstrate a solid commitment to a strategic partnership. The value of the strategic partnership is thought to lie in its ability to provide an alternative for the student who presently is not prepared academically or is not financially able. In addition, it provides a pathway for the student who desires to

attend a community college before transferring to a four-year institution (Varty & Nichols, 2002).

At the outset, Barone determined that it would be more productive to develop a few strategic partnerships than to forge relationships with community colleges in general. The institution prides itself on providing accurate information and transfer support to many community college students. However, in an effort to build upon that level of service, Barone envisioned going beyond the current level of service and thus the concept of strategic partnering was born. It was important to identify the community colleges currently recruiting from the high schools where Barone was successful as well as those community colleges who routinely sent transfer students to the university. At the same time, new opportunities with community colleges in as yet untapped geographical areas represented other potential strategic partners. All of these institutions represented attractive possibilities (Varty & Nichols, 2002).

As the first phase of the partnering initiative, Barone University identified five representative community colleges from within and two from outside the state. Following an aggressive timeline, it signed with four of them—Vader Community College, Allen Community College, Misaba College, and Wilson Community College—within two years of the start of the initiative.

Those community colleges were selected because of their unique characteristics that would be valuable in a partnership. An especially strong relationship with surrounding high schools; a sound co-operative education program; or a university center for undergraduate, graduate, and post-professional training represented attractive attributes for strategic partnerships (Varty & Nichols, 2002). The unique features that

made these community colleges attractive to Barone can be identified as follows (Varty, 2004):

1. Misaba, along with Barone, is closely involved with Adonis Automotive, a major site for co-op placement for both institutions; in fact, Adonis has been the catalyst for Misaba-Barone referrals. Additionally, Misaba had recently become the second largest source of community college transfers to Barone.
2. Westbrook and Wilson community colleges both offered opportunity for increased transfer rates. In addition, most of Barone's entering freshmen come from these two counties. They also have the largest number of co-op positions; this, combined with the fact that many Barone students take classes at these community colleges while on co-op assignment makes them even more attractive.
3. Vader, located in the same economically ravaged city as Barone, is important because Barone felt it had a civic responsibility to the city; also Vader is the largest single source of community college students to Barone.
4. Allen, as a small, relatively isolated community college, offered the challenge of developing an appropriate approach with a small college.

In addition to these community colleges all within the same Midwestern state, two community colleges outside of the state were also selected for inclusion in the first phase of the strategic partnership initiative. Barone sought an agreement with Miami-Dade Community College in Florida not only due to the community college's interest but also because some Florida companies are interested in a working relationship with Barone. Lastly, Barone is seeking a relationship with Clairmont Community College in Toledo, Ohio (Varty, 2004).

The strategic partnership proposal was presented in early fall 2002 to each of the prospective partners with the goal that unique, strategic partnerships with at least four community colleges would be in place by June of 2003. Although an agreement has not been signed with Westbrook, agreements have been forged with the other four community colleges almost within the identified timeline. Careful monitoring for actual

results and improvements in the process are to be made before additional strategic partnerships will be initiated (Varty & Nichols, 2002). According to James Varty, one of the originators of the partnership initiative, “Our next step is to take what we have learned and develop a working relationship based on our experiences with all [this Midwestern state’s] community colleges interested in working with Barone” (Varty, 2004). Thus the “web of alliance” identified by Hanna (2003) or the strategy of “collabotition” coined by Graves (as cited in Hanna, 2003) may well be operationalized by the Barone-initiated strategic partnerships.

My focus was on the collaborative process as evidenced in the Barone-Vader strategic partnership for several reasons. As previously mentioned, Vader is important because Barone felt it had a responsibility to the community. (Both institutions are located in the same Midwestern city.) Also, Vader is the single largest source of community college students to Barone. Lastly, since Barone has a very good working relationship with Vader, access to information was enhanced.

The sampling strategy included the selection of key informants for the interviews. To obtain a first-hand view of the development and implementation of the strategic partnership, the sampling included participants from Barone University and Vader Community College. Informants from both institutions included the president, senior academic officers, student and educational support personnel, and faculty. As a way to triangulate the data, the organizational consultant was interviewed at the conclusion of the interviewing. In addition to interviews with key informants, data sources also consisted of direct observation of planning sessions, seminars, and workshops as well as document analysis of concept papers, meeting notes, agreements,

announcements, and press releases associated with both the Barone-Misaba and Barone-Vader partnerships.

Interviews

The case study interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions designed to elicit facts and the informants' opinions on the development and implementation of the strategic partnership. During the interview, informants were asked if there were other people who should be contacted for information regarding the partnership. Interviews were taped; notes were kept for each separate interview.

The use of multiple interviews was intended to provide perceptions about the strategic partnership from those with different associations with it. Although the study did not presume that perception is reality, organizations are generally acknowledged to be socially situated. Each participant's perception of culture, problems, and solutions was believed to be influential in the development, design, and implementation of the partnership (Wilbur, 1996).

Direct Observation

Direct observation of activities hosted by Barone, for prospective students and parents as well as for administrators and faculty involved in the partnership, provided valuable insight into the evolving partnerships. For example, "Barone Days" are an attempt to bring those interested in careers in engineering on campus to showcase the facility and its labs. In addition, direct observation of meetings at the community college involving administrators, faculty, and students provided additional information on the dynamics of the collaborative endeavor. These meetings included events such as strategic partners meetings, emerging technologies conferences, and annual planning

meetings as well as ongoing dialogue among admissions, counseling, and faculty about issues inherent in student access and success.

Document Analysis

Documentary information pertaining to the problem-setting, direction-setting, and implementation of the strategic partnership at both sites was also reviewed to gather additional descriptive information. This information was used to gain insight into the factors that encouraged the institutions to partner, to develop an understanding of issues and challenges as the partnership evolved, and to begin to formulate assessment of whether or not the partnership was working. Documents included written and electronic communiqués; meeting announcements, agendas, notes, and other written reports of events; administrative documents including concept papers, progress reports, and confirmation notes; program-related pieces; press releases; and news articles.

The lessons I learned and the conclusions I drew were based on triangulation of data including interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The use of these multiple sources of evidence provided a broad range of developmental, attitudinal, and observational views as well as facilitated the development of converging lines of inquiry. Additionally, the use of multiple sources addressed the potential problem of construct validity, since the multiple sources of evidence provided multiple measures of the same phenomena (Denzin, 1979, as cited in Wilbur, 1996). An outline of the data sources appears in Appendix A.

The Interview Instrument

Wilbur's (1996) qualitative study examining the dynamics of community college-university collaboration included an instrument that I found relevant and helpful for my

study. Similar to Wilbur's, my interview protocol followed a semi-structured, open-ended format to seek elaboration on the factors that encouraged Barone University to partner with unique community colleges, including Vader Community College; the issues and challenges faced by these institutions in developing and implementing the partnership, and an initial consideration of the outcomes of the collaborative undertaking. The questions were designed to obtain factual information as well as opinions and perceptions about the development, implementation, and relative success of the strategic partnership as a model for interinstitutional collaboration.

The interview was sequenced to begin with questions about the role of environmental factors and institution-specific values related to the transfer function, access to Barone, and student success. The aim of these questions was to obtain a full understanding of the factors leading to the development of the strategic partnership as well as to the issues and challenges associated with implementation. In the last phase of the interview, the informant was asked to summarize, from an institutional perspective, the lessons learned from the development and implementation of the strategic partnership and to speculate on whether the partnership was working or not. The interview format was sufficiently flexible to afford the informant the opportunity to opine in areas deemed important to the understanding of the partnership and the collaborative process. A copy of the interview protocol appears in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis was the strategic partnership between Barone University, a private, premier engineering university, and Vader Community College, a public, state-supported community college. This study was written in a descriptive style because its

purpose was to understand the factors that led to the strategic partnership, the issues and challenges associated with implementation, and an initial assessment from the participants' perspective of whether the partnership was working or not. The voices of multiple interviewees as they revealed their experience with the strategic partnership, as well as direct observation and document analysis, were critical to building an understanding of the complexities of the collaborative undertaking.

The analysis consisted of pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1984), using the research questions as a guiding frame. See Appendix C for a depiction of the lines of inquiry. It shows the data sources used to answer the research questions important for this study.

As is standard practice in research involving human subjects, the informants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through the "Participant Consent Form." (See Appendix D.) At the conclusion of the interviewing, the organizational consultant was interviewed to triangulate the data, using a slightly different interview protocol. (See Appendix E.)

Limitations

Traditional prejudices against case study research definitely exist. Although it is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry, case study methodology is criticized for three reasons: (1) its supposed lack of rigor and objectivity in data collection and interpretation, (2) its presumed lack of scientific generalization, and (3) the inordinate amount of time the case study requires and the unwieldy documents that result (Yin, 2003). While this study did not attempt to determine causation in the traditional sense, maintaining methodological rigor was a concern because inferences were made based on

the evidence gathered. Appropriate tests for ensuring rigor and quality in case study design were utilized.

In addition to the limitations associated with case study research, there are three other limitations:

1. The possibility exists that some important data were overlooked.
2. The strategic partnership was only in existence for two years when the data were collected.
3. The informants were suggested by the organizational consultant because of the integral roles they played in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership. Perhaps a different story would have emerged had others been interviewed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: EXEMPLIFYING UNIVERSITY/COMMUNITY COLLEGE COLLABORATION

Introduction

This chapter reports findings that illuminate the origin, development, and implementation of the strategic partnership between a private, four-year university with selected programs in engineering and management and a public, state-supported community college. Both exist in an economically ravaged, Midwestern city still struggling to overcome the extraordinary challenges precipitated by the shift from a manufacturing society to the digital age.

The primary data sources were interviews with key informants from both institutions—including faculty, administrators, and presidents—as well as the organization consultant, observations of strategic partners meetings, “Emerging Technologies” seminars, a reception at the university president’s home, and the open house known as “Discovery Day.” Data also came from documents including the original position paper, written correspondence pertaining to the partnership, announcements and the press release associated with a signing ceremony, and other documents as suggested by the participants during the interviews. (See Appendix A.)

The chapter is organized into two case studies: one of the university and one of the community college. The first section presents background information on both

institutions and reveals how the new organizational arrangement evolved, paying particular attention to the collaborative efforts evidenced by the two institutions. The second section then looks at the research questions in an effort to determine to what extent have they been answered by the study.

Section 1: The Origins, Development, and Implementation of the Strategic Partnership

To begin, it is important to establish the context that has shaped this study. The author's prior experience as well as the information derived from this study are useful in helping us understand the factors that shaped the collaborative undertaking.

In the first case, Barone University, we see demonstrated the external and internal factors that precipitated and influenced the development of the strategic partnership. The environmental elements include increased competition combined with the demands of a rapidly changing technological society. Recognizing the potential of a heretofore untapped market—that of transfer students—Barone embarked on an aggressive plan to partner with a few carefully selected community colleges. Because of its proximity, Vader Community College represented the most logical starting place. Its external challenges similarly included a rapidly changing technological society with the attendant curricular implications for technological and pre-engineering programs. Thus issues inherent in the first two years of a bachelor's program as well as those associated with student development became salient.

Both institutions realized that each had something significant to offer the other and that by working together not only would each benefit but so too would students and the community. Such collaborative endeavors, though, exact a price: Both parties must be willing to come together to identify their common goals and also be willing to commit

substantial resources to the endeavor. Collegial leadership, receptivity to innovation, and a strong sense of commitment among those involved in the undertaking are needed from inception to implementation and beyond.

Barone University, a private, premier engineering university, and Vader Community College, a public, community college, sought to develop and implement a strategic partnership designed to customize education for students pursuing a baccalaureate degree in applied mathematics, applied physics, business, engineering, or environmental chemistry. Both institutions are located in the same community, one that has suffered the effects of a declining manufacturing age. It was home to many well-paid General Motors employees, both blue- and white-collar. The city and surrounding communities flourished until General Motors, among others, fell upon difficult economic times. Forced to radically downsize and aggressively restructure, it closed many of the city's plants with dire economic consequences for the surrounding communities.

We gain a fuller understanding of the originating factors by listening to the voices of the participants. The following case history information is derived from the semi-structured interviews with the informants.

The initial impetus for the strategic partnership was conversation between the presidents of the two institutions. The president of Barone had formerly been dean of engineering at a major Eastern university. In that role, he had forged engineering articulations with all of the community colleges in the state. Upon his arrival at Barone in 1991, one of his major initiatives was to increase the number of transfer students, a virtually untapped market. He approached the president of Vader who was very receptive to exploring ways of increasing access for Vader students to Barone.

This was no small feat, however. Despite the fact that both institutions resided in the same community, many Vader students were completely unaware of Barone. Those who were familiar with the institution thought that their chances for admission were slim to none and that even if they were admitted, they would be unable to afford it. These impediments notwithstanding, the two presidents continued exploring the possibility of working together. Part of the incentive was to find ways in which the two institutions might collaborate to enhance transition of students from Vader to Barone. They also believed it important to show the community that the two institutions could work together in an effort to rebuild the economically ravaged city in which they reside. Of course, the incentives were not entirely altruistic.

Barone, although a nationally ranked engineering school, was increasingly facing strong competition from other institutions. The president was on a mission to increase the number of transfer students. Something innovative was called for—something beyond the articulation agreements that had been forged in the past. Similarly concerned with issues of academic and social integration, other sectors within the higher education environment were at work. As we will see, a strategic partnership, designed to customize education for students pursuing a baccalaureate degree, was envisioned and ultimately presented to Barone's president. The goal is to improve mechanisms for student support and thereby enhance access to careers in management and engineering. Let us now turn our attention to the process story as told by those individuals associated with Barone. It will then be followed with the story as told by the Vader participants.

Barone University

In understanding the evolution of the strategic partnership from Barone's perspective, we will begin by looking at the factors inherent in its inception, move on to those associated with its development and implementation, and conclude with its outcomes as perceived by the participants.

The Origin of the Strategic Partnership

The nascent factors that encouraged Barone's adoption of the strategic partnership include increased competition, recognition of an untapped market, and changing institutional perspectives.

Increased competition. It has been well documented that institutions of higher education are facing extraordinary challenges at the advent of the 21st century. Their very survival is at stake; reality demands close scrutiny of formerly unquestioned practices. Certainly, Barone University was not alone in facing unparalleled competition from other four-year institutions within the state and across the nation. A top-level administrator in enrollment services, Bruce Roberts, explained it this way:

I think the university realizes our future is when you're looking at the demographics of what's gonna be available out there for students, you're not gonna be able to pull just a traditional market and survive on the numbers that we required.

Another factor that adds to the complexities of the competitive environment in which Barone University finds itself is that of curricular offerings. Barone offers nine baccalaureate programs in engineering and management, far fewer than those of the comprehensive universities with which it competes. As Roberts observed:

[Our state] took the ACT last year that shows, that said their first career choice is engineering of some type—4,000. You know how many schools are gonna be going after those 4,000 kids? That's assuming they're

serious. And that means our funnel just keeps getting narrower and narrower and narrower. And this is, I guess, another reason, what I'm trying to say, why we need to keep doing this [the strategic partnership] because our pool is shrinking rapidly. Students are just not interested in the science and engineering [programs].

It is one thing for an administrator responsible for enrollment management to recognize the threats to the very survival of the institution but quite another for faculty to similarly realize the dire consequences of continuing to ignore external threats. Typically, in their concern for maintaining the academic integrity of their programs, they focus internally and often seem mindless of the unpleasant financial realities in the external environment.

Such was not the case with a veteran faculty member at Barone. A chemistry professor, Charles Powell, commented bluntly that "If Barone had students falling out of the residence hall right now, I doubt if they'd have articulation or partnerships with institutions. Okay. This is a need basis." Nevertheless, he saw the wisdom in looking at things differently. As he explained it:

Now, okay, because institutions of higher learning want to survive, they see opportunity there now. For all the wrong reasons, we're going there. But nevertheless, we are there, and guess what? We have found out there's a lot of real reasons, good reasons why we should've been there 10, 15, years ago. So at the end of the day, it's a great thing.

Powell was admittedly passionate not only about teaching chemistry but also about doing what he could to ensure the viability of his program. He saw the partnership as a means to help him accomplish both. When asked what he had hoped to get out of the partnership, he responded as follows:

This is very selfish of me, but it's all about number of students in your programs so that your program can continue and be strong. In addition to the fact, I have a firm desire to teach chemistry to young people, and I

have to have them, if I wanta teach them. So that's what I'm looking forward to obtaining from transfer and these type of partnerships.

During the interview he frequently mentioned his concern with the extraordinary challenges students now faced in persisting to the four-year degree. He referenced some of the issues he had had to deal with in his own college attendance but observed that "nowadays it's worse than when I went to school."

Powell viewed community college attendance as an important way of helping students address some of these challenges. Mentioning his previous experience in teaching chemistry to older students, he expressed his hope that Barone would matriculate the non-traditional student: "I'm hoping that we'll see a number of older students coming to our campus. This is something that Barone University does not see a lot of, and I have had the opportunity to teach older students at Eglinton College in Eglinton, Ohio." He spoke specifically of the older student in this way: "I do find that the older student has a different perspective. When you tell them that you're gonna put something on reserve at the library, you better it be there because they're gonna be there. They bring a certain perspective to the classroom, and they calm the others down."

Increased competition and concern with survival encouraged top administrators at Barone to essentially undergo a paradigm shift. Never before had they seriously considered transfer students as a viable group to recruit for admission to Barone. That mindset, though, was changing.

Recognition of an untapped market. Throughout its eight-decade history, Barone University had been involved with the education of students desirous of careers in engineering and management. Students were admitted as freshmen and spent five years in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree. Barone offers a unique experience in that students

spend 11 weeks in an academic session and then 11 weeks in a cooperative education experience. Oftentimes, they remain with the same corporate sponsor throughout their program and are subsequently offered employment with that firm upon graduation. Thus the all-too-frequently voiced concern about securing suitable employment upon graduation was nonexistent for Barone graduates. Not only were they employed upon graduation, but also typically earning very respectable salaries from the outset.

Transfer students were virtually non-existent at the institution. According to Barone's president, Dr. Thomas Frank:

Traditionally, this has been a school where eighteen- and nineteen-year olds come here directly from high school. I know when I first got here, there were very few non-traditional students. They were all that way. None from community colleges. [The major corporate sponsor] did not encourage that for whatever reason. And no older students.

External factors being what they were, Frank determined that the institution would be wise to reexamine its position relative to transfer students. His experience as dean of engineering at an East Coast university was invaluable. As he opined:

From my 33 previous years' experience [at the] University, we brought articulation into the hallway for the university and the state... We guaranteed the first two years, so they'd take the first two years at [the] community college and transfer in, and save the tuition money. [It] made a lot easier transition in some sense for students who couldn't leave home to live on the university campus.

As the president of Barone, he was in a unique position to change the institution's perspective on transfer students. This new orientation toward a formerly untapped market was not without its challenges. Let's now turn our attention to what Barone administrators and faculty thought of this new direction.

Roberts, the top-level administrator in enrollment services, was easy to convince. He certainly recognized the threats to the institution's survival and the wisdom of

recruiting in a large, new market. In answer to the question of what he hoped to get out of the strategic partnership, he answered unequivocally:

Selfishly, more students. I mean, I think we came to the realization that we were missing a huge part of the student market for a traditional university. There's no question about that. In the past, quite frankly, we turned people away. We weren't interested in transfer students. Those were the days perhaps when [our major corporate sponsor] owned us and they were very selective, tuition was very low, and so they could get lots of applications for the positions they wanted. And so they didn't need to look at other markets. As a private school, that's just not possible for survival and the data is very clear that more and more students are going to start their college careers at the community college level. If you're looking at diversity, and we must, that even percentages of those are starting at that level, either for access or cost, or both.

Roberts also spoke about an unexpected goal associated with the partnership. In reaching out to the community colleges that had been identified as potential strategic partners, Barone soon came to realize that not only were they gaining access to the community college but also to the co-op community. Specifically, he mentioned that "the power of this partnership together versus us working [alone] is really big... That just opened doors for me [in terms of potential corporate sponsors for co-op placement] that had not, would not, be there."

Not surprisingly, it was easy to convince his assistant, Lisa Lyons, of the desirability of putting time and effort into recruiting transfer students. Articulation agreements were not new to Barone. In fact, as the result of a grant tied originally to cooperative education, her responsibilities had included the time-consuming development of articulation agreements. Those agreements, however, from Lyon's perspective were underutilized; they were, in her opinion, little more than a piece of paper in a file or verbiage on the web site. As she stated:

There's an awful lot more that needs to go into setting up a program that is meeting the needs of both institutions than just an articulation agreement. And I was happy when they started putting together the strategic partnership because there are more resources that have been put into what needs to take place.

She was explicit in describing the advantages of the partnership over simple articulation:

You can't just have a piece of paper out on our web site or in a file somewhere and expect students to be able to know what they need to do. There's just a lot of exposure, a lot more exposure that needs to take place. I mean, in the classrooms, you need presentations, you need to do everything that the strategic partnership is setting up. Collaboration between faculties involved, the administration of the schools, have support from the top down, and really make it a partnership in order for this to work.

Because of her 12 years' experience in various facets of enrollment management and co-operative education at Barone, Lyons was in a unique position to recognize the changing perspective associated with transfer students. As the initiative to attract more transfer students gained momentum, she observed:

The transfer student population is a wonderful student population to have on campus for the diversity it brings. They're more mature, they're better focused, they academically do at least as well if not better than our native student population of students. They're marketable to the companies because of their experience, because they're more mature, and they have an academic background the companies can take a look at. By the time they transfer here, they know this is where they want to be, whereas our freshmen [are often] trying to figure out, is this really what I wanta be when I grow up. [With] transfer students their retention rate and their ability to complete the program is pretty high because of what they had to go through to get here.

Not all, however, fully embraced the initiative to increase the number of transfer students. Faculty had to be convinced that Barone's reputation as a premier engineering university would not be tarnished by the aggressive pursuit of the transfer student market. As mentioned previously, they were the purveyors of the curriculum; additionally, they were accustomed to teaching students who had been at the top of their high school class.

Community college students represented an unknown quantity in which they really had no interest. Roberts explained it this way: “You know, right or wrong, people have perceptions and they’re not always accurate.”

In addition to their resistance to teaching transfer students, Roberts also mentioned faculty’s considerable reluctance to examining community college courses for possible equivalency. It was no small feat to convince them that such effort was indeed worthwhile. He spoke favorably of the admirable efforts of Susan Timmons, assistant provost, in working productively with faculty on establishing course equivalencies:

Susan and I had several discussions about how poor our process was for getting classes approved and the timeliness of this. And she’s made a gigantic effort over there [academic services] to change that. And she’s struggling with all the same problems I had when I tried to change it, but I think she made a lot more headway than I ever did. I’ll give her that.

When questioned further about why he felt she was able to work so productively with faculty, Roberts responded:

Well, maybe she was better at it. I think I have a certain fuse sometimes or I don’t have a lot of patience and I think she’s a lot more professional in how she approaches faculty. And I don’t mean that the wrong way, but I think she was able to convince them that these are some of the right things to do. But we, we still come up with some walls over there that we just haven’t been able to get over. But she was integral at the beginning...

It was essential that faculty resistance to the university’s plan to substantially increase the number of transfer students be overcome. Without their support the initiative was doomed. Powell, the chemistry professor, also provided insight into how community colleges in general and their students in particular were viewed:

...we used to look at you, that is two-year institutions and the students that go there, and turn our nose up at them. We used to say the people who are there are, well, you know, not ready. The students aren’t ready. All right. Why do we need them? Oh, yeah, we don’t. Let’s just ignore them. Let them do their thing and if one or two kids come through, well, okay, you

know. We aren't going to stop them. But you know, there's always this—oh, my gosh, I don't know whether you felt this or knew anything about this.

Thus we see in Barone an institution, like so many others, struggling for its very survival. Its president and administrators recognized the dire consequences of failing to adapt to the extraordinary challenges presented by its changing environment. Faculty, though, were far less inclined to adopt the global view necessary for fundamental change. It was up to the president and key administrators to effectuate changing world views.

Changing institutional perspectives. An administrator in charge of college transfer partnerships, James Morgan, had a good deal to say about the wisdom of a less local, more cosmopolitan perspective. He had relocated from the East Coast to the Midwest many years ago and was cognizant of the fact that he viewed things quite differently from those who had spent most of their lives in the Midwest. As he observed:

And my impression just after I got here and I started to get to know more [Midwesterners] is that if it isn't conceived in the [Midwest], it doesn't exist. It's like most [Midwesterners] know where Michigan is and where Florida is and the rest of the world. Michigan is, you have to go to it. You don't go through it to go any place. Rather insular in our thinking, sad to say. Which is ironic because they're supposedly the world capital for the auto industry; it's got some cosmopolitan industries. But on the other hand, a lot of major players in the auto industry won't have anything to do with Michigan.

Upon further reflection, however, he adopted a more optimistic stance, noting that oftentimes confidence in what one is about can have considerable impact:

I think sometimes we have misplaced confidence in what we have been doing to the point where we're not willing to test it in the big world, get real feedback. And at other times, we have, don't have an appropriate amount of confidence in stuff that we do incredibly well. But because we don't test it against the outside world, we don't realize just how good it really is.

Having spent most of his career in admissions and thus “accustomed to living with one foot in and one foot out” of the institution, Morgan was nicely positioned to notice the significant difference with which individuals approached issues, depending upon their position within the institution. He commented on the challenges inherent in working with faculty: “University faculty are very unique critters. You love them, but, boy, they can frustrate the heck outa you sometimes. Uniquely pragmatic, uniquely chauvinistic, uniquely dreamers, uniquely unique. God bless them.” In elaborating further on the challenges faculty presented as a result their local orientation, Morgan was explicit:

One of the challenges sometimes is that...the faculty...get so entrenched in their particular discipline, and they're not willing to step beyond the bounds of their discipline border, boundaries. There aren't, in fact, many people sadly who look beyond their specific role or their unique institution. And I must admit, it's part of my learning curve coming out here to [the Midwest].

Powell, though, held an entirely different perspective from the faculty that Morgan was describing. He echoed Morgan's beliefs about the necessity of having an external focus. During his interview, he spoke about the importance of giving back to the community and then moving on. In so doing, he mentioned conversations with his son who had “wanted to escape [the city in which he had grown up] and never return.” He explained it this way:

He returned only because I told him that it's important to come back and give to the community that you come from. And then expand your horizon. For one reason, there's a lot more opportunities because you're known in that community. And because you're known, you will have an opportunity to obtain a job a lot easier than if you were to go to Massachusetts where we do have family; but you're not as well known. Because here you participated in athletics, okay. You know a lot of people who graduated with you, and they are all there as a support system. So come spend two, three years, and then take off and go some place. So you're giving back plus you have your own built-in support mechanism. I

felt it was important to do it that way. He has at least paid attention to that; he's working in a middle school [in the area].

Perhaps that mindset is what enabled Powell to have a more expansive view than the faculty Morgan had mentioned. When asked what had helped to move the partnership process along, Powell spoke about the desirability of encouraging faculty from both institutions to work together. As he explained it, "As program director of chemistry, I would definitely like to get more of our faculty identified with a community college and respectively their faculty so that we are attuned to what's going on and hopefully attract more chemistry majors to our institution." Later in the interview, when asked how effective he felt the partnership had been in fulfilling its goals, he again mentioned the importance of getting faculty to work together. He explained it this way:

It will flourish once we get this transfer between faculty at our institution and faculty at [the community college]. As soon as that involvement blossoms, then okay, we will be able to squeeze out the maximum that will come out of this relationship. That's the next step. The administrators are on board; they're committed. Now we gotta get the faculty into it.

Certainly, the president held that more global, cosmopolitan view. As mentioned previously, he was instrumental in writing articulation agreements for the community colleges in an East Coast state in conjunction with a major Eastern university. Now at Barone, he held the enlightened view that transfer students represented an untapped market and that Barone would be wise to explore this considerable student population. It then became his responsibility to convince others, most notably faculty, that such an endeavor was indeed worthwhile. He explained it this way:

I would say that, there's a concern on the part of some of the more senior faculty about the quality of the student. And I've never had those concerns myself because I'd had experience with other schools. But nevertheless, it was a hard thing for some to overcome. Because [our

major corporate sponsor] had never done it. So the feeling [was] these were somehow not as good of students as the other students.

Knowing that faculty support was essential if he were to advance his initiative of gaining more transfer students, Frank set about changing the opposition to transfer students.

Although Barone had not aggressively recruited transfer students, a few had matriculated over the years. Why not take a closer look at how they had performed? The performance of those students was compared to native students, those who had started at Barone. The results were eye opening: Transfer students did as well, if not better, than the native Barone students!

Frank used this fact to encourage those with key roles and responsibilities at the institution to view his efforts regarding transfer students in a positive light. It was no simple task. Even students worried that the quality of the institution would be lowered if transfer students were admitted. A group, thought to have been encouraged by faculty, decided to confront the president. Frank met with them in his office, explaining that “some of the top students in the class were transfer students.” That information, communicated by the president, was enough to change their negative perception. As he mentioned, “It didn’t take much. I had a chance to talk to them and it was easy to convince them this is the right thing to do.” In observing further about the change in mindset regarding transfer students, he commented:

I think...people are much more satisfied with transfer students. At one time there was probably a stigma associated with transfer students, as little as ten years ago. That was ten years ago...That’s all changed now. So I think we’re making a lot of progress in attitudes toward transfer students.

Although it took time, eventually the consistent message about the quality of transfer students assuaged many of the concerns individuals had voiced about their attending Barone.

As we have seen, the critical factors that comprised the origins of the strategic partnership from Barone's perspective include increased competition, recognition of an untapped market, and changing institutional perspectives. The stage was now set for the development of something novel, a new organizational arrangement that went beyond the articulation agreements that had been forged in the past.

The Process Story

Establishing an arrangement as complex as the strategic partnership required considerable collaboration. The critical factors involved in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership include perceptions about common goals, the need for a champion, and the developing infrastructure.

Perceptions about common goals. Since Barone University and Vader Community College both exist in the same city, the presidents had an established tradition of lunching together and sharing concerns of mutual interest. According to Frank:

...since Vader Community College is in the [area] and we're in the [same] area, it seemed pretty logical to tie the two together. We've had a close relationship, I mean, the president and I have been friends for a number of years, and we both think it's advantageous for both of us to do this. It's a good thing.

Thus the impetus for the partnership involved support of both institutions' presidents. Barone wanted more transfer students, as previously noted. The advantage for Vader was a mechanism designed to enable more of its students to transfer to an institution of

Barone's caliber. It soon became apparent that there were considerable benefits not only for students, but also for both institutions and the community as well.

Students stood to gain considerably. Although driven by Barone's desire to increase numbers, those involved with the partnership spoke without exception about the strategies designed to ease transition for students from the community college to the university. These strategies were designed to provide additional academic and career development support for students. Frank mentioned the advisability of some students attending the community college at the outset of their baccalaureate program. In doing so, he pointed out the need for faculty involvement in ensuring successful transfer of courses:

I think the transition for some students, from high school living at home, to college where you're living completely away from home, is difficult. And the freshmen year is always a very tough year for a lot of students. As I see it, my own personal point of view is that in some cases, the community colleges will do quite well in those freshman-year courses...Classes tend to be somewhat small from what I've seen. They tend to get pretty good attention from faculty members. And, therefore, [they] tend to do quite well. And I don't see any problem with that. I think you have to maintain, as far as Vader and us, we have to maintain good contact between the faculty so we know what we're doing exactly, so the students take the courses that can be transferred. And the courses at the right level.

Action-level individuals voiced similar sentiments about working together with the common goal of benefiting students. The associate director of admissions, Timothy Rich, explained it this way: "We're all working at the same goal together. I mean, ultimately, ultimately, we're servicing students well." Morgan, in charge of college transfer partnerships, expressed a similar sentiment as he asked, "How do we work together to help make sure the student gets what they need to get?"

Another benefit of working together to better serve students is the positive effects on the institution. When factors of student success are considered in the broader context of the institution, the benefits to the institution become apparent. As Rich observed:

I'm working for the students first and second for my institution. And because of that, you know, you probably act a little different than some people might at other institutions where maybe they're working for themselves. [I'm] very focused on student success...I'm gonna do what's in the students' best interest and just go from there. Everything else basically takes care of itself when you do that.

Morgan similarly commented on the benefits to Barone as a result of the partnership activities: "It's a Barone investment and trying to influence the tide...All things are gonna rise a little bit. By the way, Barone's probably gonna reap some benefit from that investment but I truly believe that the investment is a much bigger thing than just a few additional transfer students." Lyons, from her perspective from within enrollment services, observed the advantages of going out into the community to secure cooperative education positions: "I think that's an added advantage for both schools. There are opportunities that we can each provide both ways. You can draw on each other's resources to enhance the opportunities for students at the community college and ultimately when they transfer here."

Perceptions about common goals include the community as well. As might be expected, Frank spoke about the desirability of working with Vader's president in an effort to rebuild the city in which both institutions resided. As he stated, "We discuss a lot of things that are going on here right now. Things that we can work together on...what we can do to try to improve the city's image and what we can do to bring in other businesses." Roberts added another perspective, one gained from his top-level position in enrollment services:

...we need to work together to develop the appropriate engineers and scientists for this local community...We need to do that. That is one of the reasons why we need to do this [partnership]. And that's a reason for the community college to be involved in this, and it's a good reason for us to be involved...and also for the employer.

Roberts also had thoughts on the role Barone could play in view of changing technological needs, specifically in relation to the life sciences. Recognizing the implications of future employment trends, he observed:

...we need to transfer this automotive technology knowledge into the life sciences and medical area...That could help the regrowth of our city and our county...We partner with Vader because we do want to do that, and then we can do some partnering research opportunities, we can have students working on both campuses and those kinds of things. And I think there's some real potential for us to grow jobs.

Perceptions about common goals is certainly an important critical factor in the development of the strategic partnership. As we have seen, key informants have variously identified common goals that enabled them to work together. By working together, students benefit, the institutions both benefit, and so does the community at large. Roberts offers the following observation about who ultimately stands to gain:

Where are most of our employers? They're not here local. This is a real disadvantage to this university. And so we've got to go outside of our home to try to get jobs and do research and well, we've got to make that a priority. And this board has decided we are staying here. We aren't going anywhere. That was discussed. And it should've been discussed. But we're not moving and we're gonna try to help with the redevelopment of this area. So, and we can do that. We play a very key role. So we can say selfishly, yeah, we want more students, but I really believe in the long run that it really will enhance the reputation of this university and the community college if we're working in concert with the companies.

Need for a champion. A second critical factor was the appearance of a champion, an individual uniquely positioned to provide the necessary impetus, as well as sustenance.

According to my research, an initiator, or champion, was considered absolutely essential for the inception, development, and implementation of the strategic partnership.

Variously described as “real key,” a “lynch pin,” and the “driver,” John Bardy had been dean of students at another Midwestern community college. His involvement in the partnership began because of his role as co-chair of a design and manufacturing alliance, a consortium of high schools, community colleges, universities, and companies. The group decided that it would be worthwhile to develop collaborative relationships among high schools, community colleges, and universities in an effort to create an integrated curriculum that would effectively serve the area’s design and manufacturing industry.

They formed several committees including one on articulation. Although it was generally believed that procedures were in place to ensure the transfer of credits of core curriculum, it also was apparent that little attention was given to the smooth transition of students from the community college to the university. Bardy and others perceived value, from a design and manufacturing standpoint, in exploring that issue. He and Roberts subsequently wrote a position paper that outlined the facets of a strategic partnership that added a dimension to transfer relationships not addressed by simple articulation. Full support of top administration was crucial. Even though the top administrators might not be actively involved, they would delegate responsibilities associated with the partnership to a key person who would represent the institution.

The position paper was then shared with Frank who became very interested in it. With his strong desire to increase the number of transfer students, he welcomed a mechanism by which that might be facilitated. The partnership document included a comprehensive series of action strategies designed “to provide greater opportunity and

exceptional academic and career development support.” Although articulation was viewed as the foundation, the partnership was designed to go far beyond simple articulation. The goal was to develop and implement a series of strategic partnerships with select community colleges, both within the state and across the nation. The focus was to be within the state first.

Frank was quite impressed with the concept. At this time, he was working closely with the president of Vader Community College on various projects. As mentioned previously, both presidents felt that it was important for the two institutions to work together for the betterment of the community. In recognizing the potential inherent in the partnership, Bardy observed: “I guess you might say a strategic partnership of this nature was something that would naturally flow or would be a natural instrument. What it is, for the broader objective, the playing out of bringing two schools together in the best interest of the community.”

A champion was needed to advance the initiatives of the strategic partnership. Morgan, when asked what had enabled Barone and Vader to work together in the early stages, mentioned the consultant. As he stated, “You have to recognize we had John Bardy, consultant; and John came in from a different angel and had some other connections.” He elaborated further, referring specifically to Bardy’s involvement with “workforce development connections” resulting from his association with the design and manufacturing alliance (mentioned earlier) and his position as dean of students with oversight for co-op at his community college. Much of this was salient due to the Barone’s programs and the nature of the partnership. As Morgan observed: “Community colleges are engaged in your community, with industry. John has fully appreciated the

opportunities that that presented.” Morgan also, characteristically, added the notion of a new perspective: “One of the things that has really helped us a great deal on this, in many respects, is having John Bardy because he can provide a continuity and a focus, as well as just a fresh look. Any time you come from ten feet away, you’re an expert. And that’s extremely valuable and powerful.”

Perhaps Lyons summarized the importance of a champion, and the difference one could make, best. In so doing she not only described Bardy and his role, but also alluded to the important distinction between simple articulation and the strategic partnership:

John has really been able to move this forward and garner the support from both Barone and the partnership schools, more so than anything that I have seen in all the years working with this. One of my biggest frustrations with the transfer program—they keep coming at me and saying, “Okay, we’re gonna set up an [articulation] agreement with this school and this school.” And I’m like “Why are we doing this? If we’re not gonna market successfully the programs that we have, why are we continuing to set up [just articulations]. To me, it didn’t make sense—it was a lot of work, getting the [articulation agreements] set up and maintaining all of them. So I’ve been thrilled to see what they’re doing with these partnerships because to me, this will work. This is what has been needed.

As an outsider with an extensive network of contacts, Bardy was the logical choice. Support from the top was essential, and he had that. In explaining how he was retained as an organizational consultant rather than interim director of cooperative education, Bardy explained:

The president was much more interested in the implementation of strategic partnerships so this is something that clearly was initiated at the direction of the chief executive of this university. Dr. Frank said I want you to work on the development of strategic partnerships. We want to increase the number of students and do what’s necessary. And so there was a lot of negotiation involved in my coming to Barone for this purpose. And I guess the reason I bring it up is that clearly this was something that was initiated by the president, which I think is the important principle.

With support from the president firmly established, Bardy began the process of operationalizing the action strategies outlined in the partnership document. The first step was to involve key Barone administrators. Roberts, of course, was intimately involved, having co-authored the original position paper. Lyons, Morgan, and Rich were soon brought into the fold. Lyons explained it this way:

Well, I believe Bruce Roberts and John Bardy are really the brainstorm behind all of this. John has had a lot of very, very creative ideas; and he's really been the impetus behind all of this. Coming from the community college arena, he had all the contacts.

Once he had established contact with key administrators and action-level people, Bardy set up brainstorming sessions and informational meetings. They were held frequently and lasted for a couple of hours. Bardy was diligent in providing meeting summaries and visibly maintaining a presence on Barone's campus. He established and reinforced contacts through phone, email, fax, and campus visits. As Lyons noted, "John Bardy has been a real key for getting all the right players in the right room at the right time...and making sure it all happens. He had a very unique ability to bring people at high levels together and to accomplish a lot in a very short amount of time."

Due to its proximity, Vader Community College was the logical choice with which to begin. Because of his work as dean of students at a community college and as co-chair of the design and manufacturing alliance, Bardy had a unique ability "to get on people's doorsteps." He soon identified key contacts at Vader and familiarized them with the various aspects of the strategic partnership. Support from top administration was crucial, and he was able to obtain it. As Morgan observed:

Pete (President Bosco of Vader) had looked around to see, okay, who are the people who could be key players in this? And that's somebody else

who helped facilitate the start and that's... You have to recognize we had John Bardy, consultant, and John came in from a different angle and had some other connections...I think one of the things that has really helped us a great deal on this is, in many respects, is having John Bardy. Because he can provide a continuity and a focus, as well as just a fresh look.

Rich was perhaps in the best position to comment on the importance of Bardy's influence in the development of the partnership. In his role of associate director of admissions, he frequently had contact with colleges and universities in the quest for new students. He was a known figure on campuses where he gave classroom presentations, set up information tables, and met with counselors all in an effort to provide accurate communication about Barone's programs. In responding to a question about what facilitated the process of developing and implementing the partnership, he commented as follows:

I think we're on track. I think we're on track with our plans. I think that the real good part of this whole process is that the consultant, John Bardy, when he laid it out, it has been very logical, very measurable in terms of these are the things we need to do, when we need to do them...I think it's been a great benefit that we have an outsider that was able to help guide us through this process. I think if it would've been left internally, to an internal person only, it may or may not have been successful...I would tend to think probably [it] would not have been as successful, and I'm very, personally I'm very glad that he's the person we're working with, [to] help guide us through this process.

Developing infrastructure. With a champion in place to advance the common goals held by the various stakeholders, we can start to see the emergence of a developing infrastructure. Full support of top administration was deemed essential. As mentioned earlier, both presidents enthusiastically embraced the concept of a strategic partnership. Referring to Vader's president, Frank commented, "...we both thought this was a different route for students to pursue, and traditionally this has been a school where...eighteen-, nineteen-year olds come here directly from high school." Frank was

intimately involved, so much so that he spoke of routine lunches with transfer students where concerns about scholarship money and transfer credits were discussed.

Administrators and faculty were equally cognizant of his involvement and support.

Morgan, for example, expressed his opinion as follows: "...when the president says 'let's do it', that empowers people to get on and do some things." Representing the faculty perspective, Powell noted:

...the point I'm trying to make is that the administration is committed to making this a success. And you should feel blessed because once they have finally decided that that's what they want to do and they're gonna do it, and they're gonna make sure that faculty like, Chuck, okay, is gonna come along, whether he wants to or not, it's going to get done.

Although the president had the vision, it was not he who was actively involved in the actual development and implementation of the partnership. That was delegated to upper- and middle-level administrators who were ultimately responsible for effectuating the action strategies constituted by the partnership. Key contacts were to be identified at both the university and the community college; each was to be fully acquainted with the partner institution. In recognizing the comprehensive degree of involvement, Bardy commented, "So that really began this [partnership] at a different level."

To foster the level of involvement that was needed, collaboration among both administrators and faculty within the university was essential. Common goals, collegial leadership, and encouragement to take risks created a climate conducive to working together. Good working relationships within the institution are inchoative; only when they are in place can we hope to find positive outcomes to our external reaches. Rich commented as follows on the value of personal relationships and their evolving nature at Barone:

I'm a very firm believer in that success is built on personal relationships. The more personal relationships you can enhance, I firmly believe the more success[ful] you're gonna be, and I think this is an area that inside Barone we're developing this--these interpersonal communications, these interpersonal relationships outside of the partner agreements.

When asked specifically how faculty had reacted to the initiative, Rich responded, "I don't have a lot of contact with a lot of the faculty on this particular issue but those faculty that have always been involved, have bought into this [partnership] quite wholeheartedly." Powell did provide the faculty perspective: "...we have administrators who are assigned, like John Bardy, okay. James Morgan. Okay, who are assigned to make sure that the programs are successful. So when you put time, money, and people into an effort, then it's going to become successful."

Many of the informants mentioned the commitment of additional resources. The decision to retain an organizational consultant who could focus his time and energies on the strategic partnership was salient. Two other administrators were hired whose primary responsibility was to develop and implement partnerships with select community colleges within the state and across the nation. Others already associated with the university experienced changed assignments to enable them to devote more time and energy to the partnership initiatives. Upon reflection two years after implementation, Lyons noted:

...it came from the top down and with that, the ability to hire the resources that we need to get that going. John Bardy—bring him on as a consultant. Gene Woods was hired. Having him here allowed Bruce [Roberts] to...Bruce was the key person before and it gave him an extra person that could really focus on putting together plans and all of that for this program. Then they took James Morgan, about a year ago or maybe two years ago, [and] this became his focus as well. Just being able to have adequate resources to do what we needed to do with this, to get this thing going has been key to getting us to this stage as well...Really having those resources added has been key.

As we have seen, the support of the president is vitally important to the developing infrastructure as is delegation of responsibilities to key upper- and mid-level administrators. With adequate resources in place, it is now helpful to turn our attention to ways of encouraging teamwork among stakeholders. In analogizing the partnership to a marriage, Rich captured the importance of deepening relationships:

I think [the partnership] enhances the relationship. Bruce Roberts, the vice president, used a really good analogy one time in that these are like marriages. Anybody can get married. It's like an articulation agreement. You sign a legal document. It's what you do beyond the signing of that document that really determines the strength of your partnership. So, if like in a marriage, if you're real committed to it, there's evidence of that and how it shows. And a partnership, it's the same thing but it's a deeper relationship than just signing a piece of paper. What we've noticed in the past, for most places, that people are quick to sign the articulation agreements and it's just not real helpful in developing the deeper relationship. The partnership that we address with Vader, I think addresses that relationship issue, and I'm a big believer in that. So for me personally, it opens the doors for me to have better contact with the key players on both campuses, but particularly at Vader. So it helps me in that way.

The infrastructure was now in place and recognizable. Energy was needed to put it in motion. Several individuals spoke about momentum, synergy, and a win-win mindset during their interviews. Lyons, with her experience of over a decade in enrollment management, was in a unique position to note the strategic changes. She observed, "There's a tremendous amount of momentum and a lot more energy, and I think it's a win-win for both schools and ultimately the students. For the first time in 12 years, [it] seems like it's really the right way to go about setting up a transfer program." Similarly, Roberts in commenting on the logic of approaching the local community college, spoke about synergy and the benefits derived from working together:

It just seemed like there were so many synergies that we could [take advantage of by working] together. [It] just didn't make sense that if we're going to do this, why wouldn't you start with a local community

college? And I don't think we even realized at that time perhaps some of the strengths they bring. Nor do they understand perhaps some of the strengths we bring to them.

Frank, in providing the president's perspective also expressed similar sentiments: "For this thing to work, both organizations have to be behind it, not just us, not just them. It's a win-win for both schools and both schools have to appreciate that, to see it work."

The story of how the strategic partnership was envisioned, developed, and implemented would not be complete without taking a look at the outcomes as seen through the eyes of the Barone players. Where did they see the partnership going? What particular concerns might they have?

An important aspect of the partnership document included language about review and its frequency. Specifically, the following wording was included in the agreement: "As a living document, this Statement is subject to review by the partners every two years." If the partnership with a particular community college was not fulfilling the stated goals of the agreement, it would not be renewed; and other strategic partners would be sought. All of the participants were aware of the transient nature of any individual partnership, and this realization shaped their views as they anticipated the future.

Outcomes as Seen by the Participants

The Barone-Vader partnership had been in existence for precisely two years at the time of the interviews for this study. The informants provided valuable insight into its expected evolution and expressed concerns about its sustainability.

Expected evolution. As might be expected, the president as well as the administrators spoke about maintaining the partnership if deemed worthwhile and discontinuing it if it were not meeting mutual interests of both institutions. In speaking

about the absolute necessity of increasing the number of transfer students, and partnering strategically toward that end, Frank was explicit:

We'll have to look at ways we can make sure [the numbers do] increase. Maybe there are some things we aren't doing now that should be done. No reason why the numbers shouldn't increase. There's a lot more community colleges we can work with. I would be pushing that very hard. Vader's gonna, I'm sure that's gonna work out fine, but Miami Dade is working out fine, too. And Misaba will work out fine. I would look at, for example Maracopa Community College in Phoenix to get Hispanic folks. El Paso Community College is one we're dealing with. To get Hispanic students, to get minority students. Northern Virginia Community College is another one. There are several down in Florida besides Miami Dade. We just have to make sure the jobs are around there... So I would be willing to extend it to other community colleges. I'm certain we'll get the numbers up by using that vehicle. This is sort of a, I wouldn't say a test run, but it's a, we're gonna iron out problems here with the Vader system and some others here, and then we'll expand it to other community colleges.

As a top administrator charged with getting the numbers, Roberts frequently mentioned his concerns about obtaining them throughout his interview. He also expressed concern about the time and effort required:

I worry about these things because of the labor intensiveness of this. It's a great idea, but I am worried whether they're gonna work or not. What I've already kind of decided in my mind is some of them will and some of them won't. And as a university, we're gonna have to make a decision how much time we put in some of these; and some we don't. Because if I'm only gonna get six students a year out of the community college, I'm not gonna be able to put much time in that. Maybe six is a good number if you're not getting anybody, but that's not really a partnership. We can call it that, but that's not what I'm working for because we can't live on those kinds of numbers.

In anticipating future directions, he mentioned his plans for accountability and how he planned to carry them out:

I think it's very, very important that we have these performance measurement meetings on a regular basis with the community colleges. And what I've charged Gene Woods with is that he's in charge of these partnerships, and he is to hold meetings on occasion, internally, everybody's

involved, let's say with the Misaba commitment. And there's [an annual plan] being put in place, what we expect to accomplish in the next 12 months. That's why we're trying to build these timelines with these community colleges.

Roberts also mentioned a recent meeting with one of the strategic partners and the ideas that had been generated. The next step would be to work with the organizational consultant in developing a calendar of events related to that particular community college.

Morgan, in his role as director of college transfer partnerships, voiced similar sentiments about the evolutionary process associated with the strategic partnerships in general. He spoke of the lessons learned in this way: "We have learned as we've built relations with other colleges that's it really is not a one-size-fits-all. Each one really is unique. I think we've got a sound model, and I think we're building several small models."

The individual with the most direct involvement with the community colleges was Rich. In his frequent trips to campuses as part of his recruiting efforts, he was adequately situated to assess the potentiality of partnering. His contacts with students, faculty, and staff enabled him to provide valuable, relevant input about selected community colleges as potential partners. As he stated, "Because I'm the person on the front lines, obviously, I get involved pretty much every place." When asked how effective he felt the partnership with Vader had been in fulfilling its goals, he commented:

It's hard to measure the full goals because most of the goals are probably longer term. Short-term goals, mid-term goals, I'd say we've been fairly successful. That the initial indications are that this is being beneficial to both institutions. I think the jury's still out on the long-term goals... Personally, with Vader, I think what we're doing is really a good thing, and I would like to see us continue it on an ongoing basis. Some of the other institutions, I'm not sure about, but Vader, I think, because of the

proximity to our school, that there's advantages for us to maintain that relationship.

Another aspect the participants commented on in connection with the evolutionary process associated with the partnership involved the cooperative education component. As mentioned earlier, cooperative education was the hallmark of a Barone education in that it provided graduates in engineering and management with invaluable work experience throughout their baccalaureate program. To maintain a sufficient number of corporate sponsors so that students could be appropriately placed, however, presented its own set of ongoing challenges.

An adequately functioning partnership held great promise for strengthening the cooperative education component. Roberts expressed his thoughts about the next step being the need to develop relationships with area businesses:

The next part of that is the co-op piece. That's the piece that's probably the weakest development part on all of the partnerships together because we talked at the [partnership] announcement of having maybe even the community college students already working somewhere, and we just kinda carry that into a co-op job at Barone. We have not developed that process yet, nor have we developed that relationship with the employers to pull it off. But I hope to do that together. That could come in a number of ways. Students maybe working during the summer with the expectation that they're already a student here. The company will already realize, that's why I did this because you're going to go to Barone, and then you'll stay here.

Lyons also referred to strengthening the cooperative education component through partnering. In speaking about outcomes, she referred specifically to the partnership with Misaba College which has had a strong co-op program in place: "One of the key things that I have seen is the partnering with the corporations, the sharing of information, taking some of the companies that Misaba's working with and turning those into opportunities for Misaba-Barone students."

One last aspect associated with the evolutionary process was the possibility of offloading, to some extent, the freshmen and sophomore years to the community college. Perhaps they are better suited to providing the first two years of the baccalaureate program. Smaller classes, taught by faculty well versed in issues of pedagogy, could provide a sound foundation from which students could advance to upper-level courses. Those advanced courses would be offered by senior faculty heavily involved in research. These faculty would be in a position to involve juniors and seniors with their research in areas such as fuel cells, wireless technology, and the life sciences. Frank put it this way:

As far as institutional planning, we ought to give thought to really increasing these numbers to the level where you would really change certain aspects of the whole program. So the freshmen/sophomore years might be done at a community college. We haven't gotten to that point yet, but you got a couple hundred transfer students coming every year, you can offload a lot of the freshmen and sophomore courses. And that's the kind of thing I would have in mind. It's done in a lot of systems right now. California, that's one, so where a place like Berkeley only has upper class courses. I know in Arizona they're moving to that too.

The participants not only commented upon the expected evolution of the strategic partnership but also shared their perceptions about outcomes two years after inception. In doing so, they expressed concern about sustainability and alluded to the dynamic nature of the partnership.

Outcomes concerns. The participants unequivocally mentioned concern about sustainability. It was expressed variously in regard to the time and effort required, the need to demonstrate a substantial increase in the number of transfer students matriculated, and the continuing need for a champion. Morgan, in speaking about the partnership as a strategy for increasing the number of transfer students, commented frankly as follows:

In many respects I think the jury is still out. The idea behind it is great but the amount of time and energy as far as dollars, if you will, that's being invested, heck, we could create full tuition scholarships for a whole bunch of transfer students and increase our enrollment of transfers in a heart beat and not have to spend the time and energy on it.

Roberts also commented that "it is very labor intensive right now" and expressed concern about being able to deliver on all that had been promised thus far. He firmly believes that the number of strategic partners needs to be limited because "it's too easy to commit to all these colleges; we're gonna do all this stuff, and so far, we're not even sure we can do all the stuff we started with the first one. And until I can see what's gonna happen...we're really spreading ourselves thin."

Lyons, at the action level of the partnership, was in an ideal position to offer credible observations. She too had commented frequently throughout her interview on concern about time and effort as well as concern about the numbers. Additionally, she expressed her concern about the continued need for a champion in this way:

We need to make sure that we maintain all of that activity and that we have somebody like John Bardy. If he's not the person, [then we] have to have somebody that's in that role that can keep this going. Because that to me was the most difficult part. You've got Tim who's a transfer recruiter, but it take a tremendous amount of time to set all these activities [associated with the partnership] up. He really doesn't have the time. He's on the road, recruiting, so to me, if this is gonna work, we need to be able to maintain that. From my perspective and from what I have seen over the years of the transfer program, [that] would be my greatest concern.

Lyons saw the need for a maintenance plan in ensuring the viability of the partnership:

I think coming up with a maintenance plan to ensure these are the minimum number of things that we're gonna do each year and these are the meetings that we're going to have, [this is what we will do to encourage] faculty collaboration...Coming up with a plan and making sure that the resources are there to ensure that the plan takes place.

Even though those intimately involved with various aspects of the partnership unanimously voiced concerns about sustainability, they nevertheless expressed optimism in speaking about the dynamic nature of the partnership and what that held for the future. Lyons, in reflecting on changes in various student services since embarking on the partnership, commented as follows:

Just an awareness and increased focus has forced us to really take a look at everything we do and try to make it the best that it can be. And we're still not completely there yet. But to be there, it's always gonna be out there, and something always probably to keep moving toward because things keep changing.

Rich drew an analogy to farming, speaking about all that is required at the outset and how all that will be for naught if care is not taken to nurture what has been put in place. As he observed, "You have to follow it through all the way 'til the time you harvest. And then you have to make plans to do it all over again. And if so, if you want to have a successful venture like we're doing with this partnership, I view it as a never-ending process."

Even though he had been especially vocal in expressing concern about the time and effort required by the partnerships in general, Morgan expressed optimism as he thought about the effectiveness of the Barone-Vader partnership in fulfilling its goals:

Just looking at the Barone-Vader relationship, I'd say it's been effective. I think it could be more effective. I think we're getting it. It's a journey. We're all learning. We go to school every day. And you know, as long as we keep growing and all of that, yeah, it's gonna grow. And I think good things are gonna happen.

In expressing his opinion about outcomes, Roberts also expressed a degree of optimism, noting that the commitment by the partnering community colleges "has been really a really pleasant surprise." He explained further as he commented upon how Barone had changed as a result of the joint undertaking:

Barone has changed dramatically. I think there's far more respect for the community college education system here. Far more respect for our partnership schools that we're working with. Way, way more. A lot of those misconceptions have gone away. When you've got faculty members at Vader talking to faculty members here, or even about potential...that just makes my heart warm because those things would never have happened...I think it has raised the level of awareness of these community colleges and what they're trying to accomplish.

Frank too was optimistic although somewhat guardedly so. As he observed, "I think it is going the way I would've anticipated it to go. A lot more interest, and Vader students seem a lot more interested in coming over to Barone which is what we want. Now, [if] the numbers don't show in year two—I assume they will."

Thus we see that Barone, faced with competition for students, decided to do things differently. In recognizing that it was no longer possible to simply recruit 18- and 19-year-old students in the ways in which they were accustomed, they turned their attention to a heretofore untapped student population—transfer students. The strategic partnership represented the vehicle by which community college students could be adequately prepared for successful transition to Barone. Examining the story of its development and implementation deepens our understanding of the importance of creating interdependencies and overcoming resistance to enhance collaborative undertakings.

The next section examines the original community college with which Barone sought to partner. It will be noted that the Vader story, much like the Barone story, consists of the internal workings of administrators and faculty. In addition, though, is the story of Vader's receptivity to Barone's partnership initiatives. As a result, the Vader story is intertwined with the Barone story in a way that is not evidenced in the Barone

story. Examining the story of the partnership in this way will yield a deeper understanding of the dynamics of collaborative efforts.

Vader Community College

Located just a few miles from Barone University, Vader Community College is the largest post-secondary education institution in the area. It has a solid reputation for academic excellence in both its general education and its vocational programs. In addition to its programs, the college also takes pride in its faculty, small class sizes, convenient locations, and personalized attention, all of which are designed to ensure student success to the greatest extent possible (*Vader Community College Course Catalog, 2003-2004*).

The Vader Community College story includes many of the same themes related to collaborative efforts that were apparent at Barone, but from the community college perspective. In particular, we will note the originating factors to be a changing technological society, attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program, and concern with issues related to student development. As the process story unfolds, we will again see the common themes to be perceptions about common goals, the need for a champion, and the developing infrastructure. And, as with Barone, we will note how the participants perceived outcomes two years after inception. Specifically, Vader administrators and faculty spoke about the expected evolution of the partnership and offered their perceptions about sustainability and the dynamic nature of the partnership.

The Origin of the Strategic Partnership

The nascent factors that encouraged Vader's adoption of the strategic partnership were different from those of Barone. They include a changing technological society,

attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program, and concern with issues related to student development.

Changing technological society. Community colleges are increasingly feeling the pressure to ensure that their occupational programs prepare graduates for employment in the communities they serve. Given the rapid rate of technological change, this is no small feat. Program review is an important aspect of ensuring efficiency. As employment needs change, so too must the curricular offerings. Faculty must work constantly to keep abreast of technology. Administrators are faced not only with the challenges of ensuring that adequate resources are in place for the various program offerings but also with the unpleasant task of discontinuing programs when warranted.

Dr. Peter Bosco, president of Vader Community College, spoke openly about these challenges throughout his interview. In referring to the external environment, he stated:

Employment taxes are down because our employment picture is worse than any other state. And that's borne itself [out] through the revenue committee saying that this year we're gonna experience a \$340 million, \$370 million deficit out of this year's budget. That is based really on the loss of revenue from...all employment sectors...We're being hit harder than most other states.

He spoke also about the difficulties in forecasting employment needs and the attendant curricular implications:

What should we be training for? What should we have our faculty look into? What new programs should we be looking at for the people next? So, in the meantime, we continue on with the programs we have. We never give up a program. And I have to really commend our faculty because they're looking at their own programs to see how they can bring them up to date.

According to Bosco it was becoming more and more difficult to forecast future employment needs. Ten or fifteen years ago it was possible to do studies to predict the high demand areas. He gave the example of the community clearly saying to the community college that there was a need in information technology, that that is where the jobs were going to be in the future. He mentioned his recent attendance at an American Association of Community Colleges seminar where a report listing the top ten occupations was released. Nine of those ten occupations were in the service industry and required little in the way of academic preparation. Bosco expressed his frustration this way: "So when we sit here and we try to identify and drive our content, curriculum, [for] the next five, seven years, what we can't answer is what jobs are gonna be out there? What should we be teaching?"

Bosco then mentioned Barone and its advantage of being "a very specialized area" with "a very broad market area." He explained that Vader looked to Barone for help in deciding "what should we be training our workforce who typically stays in our community [to do]?" When asked specifically about the role meeting state employment needs might have played in the development of the strategic partnership, Bosco spoke about the value of the co-operative education component. He explained the benefits as follows:

There is an economic advantage for an individual who graduates from Barone University. A couple reasons. One, because they're a co-op institution and part of your enrollment as a student is that you will spend approximately a year in a co-op experience. So you have an advantage in one, more experience by the time you graduate and two, you have contacts. And you have those employers who will provide recommendation letters for you if they don't hire you.

Jaclyn Russell, in her role as the transfer counselor, was adequately situated to comment on the advantages of partnering with Barone. She spoke of the efforts Barone made to involve Vader at various levels. Barone staff routinely visited Vader's campus, addressing counselors in staff meetings. They also invited Vader to participate in various events occurring on Barone's campus. It had gotten to the point where both institutions sought to involve the other with various happenings on their respective campuses. According to Russell, "We have gotten so that we always inform each other, each school, when we're inviting a guest speaker or we're having a workshop that we think the faculty or the staff would be interested in at the other school."

She also explained how this situation was different from those arrangements that simply involved articulation agreements: "I think we've done more of that than other schools that perhaps we have signed articulation agreements with. Very often, it's 'okay, let's all get together and sign this agreement, and everybody has dinner together or whatever, and that's probably it.'" Lastly, Russell also talked about Barone's unique ability to prepare students in those areas involving technology. In speaking about the well-equipped labs designed to meeting changing technologies, she observed, "I think one of the advantages of going to Barone is to see how many wonderful toys, if you will, that they have for students to [get] the hands-on [experience]." Russell also spoke positively about Barone's outreach in this way: "The Barone people are willing to come and make sure that our students and our faculty know where the future is going. What they see for the technical field as well as the computer field."

As we have seen, a changing technological society provided impetus for the two institutions to partner. Another originating factor from the Vader perspective involved attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program.

Attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program. In reflecting upon an early conversation with Frank about partnering, Bosco spoke of his own receptivity. In fact, the idea so appealed to him that he suggested they set up a “test pilot.” If it proved successful, it could then be taken around to other community colleges. As Bosco explained:

What you hope to accomplish when you look at the mission of the community college is that we’re a two-year college, associate degree granting, and we have an open door policy. So we accept people in, we provide developmental education to make sure that they’re [prepared] to go on to a college course. And one of our missions is to be a pipeline and a feeder system to four-year colleges and universities. And the more partnerships that we have garnered, that provide that avenue for our students, the better off we are, the community is, our students are.

He specifically mentioned Barone, observing that heretofore few Vader students had attended there even though both institutions resided in the same community. In thinking about the advantages of partnering with Barone, Bosco said:

The other advantage is the fact that, one of the things that Dr. Frank said, [is that] very few of the students in [our city] and [our county] were attending Barone. And we saw that we had a global institution that [is] top in the world and what a better opportunity for our students [than] to be able to go on and enter.

Beyond addressing the role Barone could play in providing baccalaureate options for Vader students in a general way, Bosco also spoke of a more specific function. According to Bosco, Frank envisioned Barone’s accepting students who were not quite ready for the Barone curriculum. Those students, matriculated at Barone, would enroll in appropriate Vader courses. Bosco referred specifically to calculus, observing that since

calculus was not offered at Barone, Frank wanted to send those students to Vader because it was “remedial for Barone.”

Not surprisingly, the other Vader participants had much to say about the issue of the freshmen/sophomore years and how the partnership might impact them. Stanley Small, an administrator in the academic office, talked about his concerns for students’ ability to transfer seamlessly from Vader to the institution of their choice. In explaining his perception of the role transfer students played in the development of the strategic partnership, he referred to transfer students as the “fundamental ingredient.” He also compared the strategic partnership with the articulation agreements that had been in place for years:

Before I took this office, we had lots of articulation agreements that covered a quantity of different subject matter, different institutions. And many of them were, and I mean this literally, it’s a cliché, but literally were not worth the paper they were written on. They were worth nothing. Because any agreement that spells out that we have this arrangement, students can transfer, and concludes with the receiving institution “can change at any time without notice” is useless. That does nothing for my students. So we have a group here called the articulation transfer task force that I am the leader of, and I set out as a goal [that] we would not have any articulation agreements in the future that did not have a two-year warranty. So that any student starting here is on the same footing as a student starting at the transfer institution...With the partnership that Barone proposed, that was really going even a step further. That was really emphasizing this agreement and protection.

An administrator in student services, Mark Miller, was also well positioned to comment on the role the community college could serve. As he remembered, conversation had taken place with the “Barone folks” about the wisdom of discussing the partnership with high schools as part of their recruiting efforts. If high school counselors and students were aware of the benefits of a Barone education, they could use this information in their academic planning, ensuring that their high school curriculum was

adequately preparing them for attendance at Vader followed by successful transfer to Barone. He spoke not only of the obvious cost savings of attending Vader but also of one of the advantages of the partnership: Students who might not be ready for enrollment at Barone would be referred to specific courses at Vader that would provide the necessary skills and abilities.

Russell provided further clarification about the concept of referral to the community college rather than denial to the university. She explained it this way: “Part of the goal was to show students, regardless of where they were with the math skills or their writing skills or whatever, that they could take classes at the community college level that would prepare them to transfer and be right on track for the Barone classes.” Russell also explained that “one of the reasons for the partnership was to make it a viable option for students to know that they could start here at Vader, and they could transfer to Barone and be ready to take all of their engineering courses or their management courses or whatever they were gonna go into.” She too mentioned the economics of attending the community college, observing that “our tuition is just a fraction of what a private university tuition is. All of these background classes that they can get at Vader are classes they don’t have to pay four-year private school tuition for.”

Barbara Mason, associate dean of science and math, provided yet another perspective. It was important that Barone view Vader and its curriculum in a favorable light. As she stated, “It is really important that Barone believes the quality of our courses is at the level that they need.” She explained the involvement of key faculty from physics, chemistry, and math in the early meetings, observing that they held “a pretty high-end requirement level for the upper-level students.” According to Mason, these

faculty “try to be ubiquitous for people that are developmental, they’re thinking of all learning styles, and all previous math damage. But I think when you’re competing in the big leagues and going to Baron, you do need academic challenge.”

Adam VanHouten, a physical sciences instructor, provided the faculty voice. Relatively new to the Vader faculty, he was hired full time during the fall of 2002, at the time when the partnership was being implemented. Mason had brought him in as one of the key faculty mentioned above. He soon became involved in reviewing and restructuring the engineering curriculum as well as in advising students. According to VanHouten, one of the incentives for Vader to partner with Baron was to increase enrollment in the college’s science and math courses and to familiarize Vader students with the advantages of a Barone education. As he stated, “It really kinda fired people up about science and math, especially when they see Barone is ranked in the top ten in some of the different fields.”

We have seen how both a changing technological society and attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program played a part in the inception of the strategic partnership. The final originating factor that we will consider concerns issues of student development and how concern with them was addressed by the partnership.

Issues of student development. Miller spoke at length about the necessity of understanding the issues inherent in student development. Describing it as “a big part of the student services literature” that indicates students are going through a developmental process unique to educational institutions, he explained its importance in counseling and advising. Miller perceives “student development as all of student services”; consequently, he suggests that advisors, in counseling students about transfer, need to

discuss more than just instructional issues and courses to be taken. Specifically, the student's development should be addressed including "long-term career aspirations and challenges they'll face at Barone."

When asked to describe what he believed student development should be about, Miller mentioned the difficulties community colleges face as a result of the student populations they are designed to serve. According to Miller, "We [not just Vader] run an operation that runs against student development. It slices education up into little chunks, get it on the run, park their car quick, run into each class, and run to whatever else you're doing." By comparison, though, an institution such as Barone was better suited to meet student needs. As Miller explained, "Whereas a place like Barone will focus much more on student development. They will be much more aware [of] taking responsibility for the lives of their students."

From her perspective as the transfer counselor, Russell also alluded to issues of student development. In particular, she mentioned the idea of enhancing students' chances for success as a salient reason for developing the strategic partnership. The goal was not simply to increase the number of transfer students. As she explained it, "The idea was to try to improve a student's chances of being successful. Taking the right classes here at Vader, getting a good foundation, so that when they transfer to Barone they will do well."

Russell, in describing Vader's three goals, mentioned workforce training, occupational education resulting in the associate of applied science degree, and transfer education leading to a baccalaureate degree. In further elaborating upon the transfer

student population, she spoke about the valuable role the community college could play for some students. As she explained it:

I think another reason is because some students...may end up wanting to go to a school like Barone; they may not have been serious students when they were in high school. They may not have been very successful when they were in high school. So the community college is a good place for them to find out that they do have the ability, they just need to take some classes to kind of catch up, if you will, and prepare themselves for a four-year college experience.

Mason also spoke about the various reasons for which students attended Vader.

Frequently, students attended the community college in order to make up some deficiency before applying to a four-year institution. She also described another group of students “that probably could make it at Barone but don’t know that yet. They don’t set a high enough goal for themselves.” She expressed concern for both groups—those that were trying to overcome a deficiency and those that were without a goal—in terms of academic persistence. According to Mason, the question of whether there was even a pool of students “really capable of doing this” was addressed during one of the initial meetings. Obviously, it was decided that there were.

When asked if there was anything else that contributed to the inception of the partnership, Mason mentioned the importance of empowering students to view themselves as capable of fulfilling their academic dreams. She explained it this way:

There are students with no capacity to envision themselves as anything ever higher than a family from which they came, and sometimes they think they have no right. So my request to Barone was to allow those students to have an opportunity to go to Barone. I can’t see myself at some place that I’ve never been. So if I’m reaching for more students than just the already college intending, I have to allow them to see themselves as a student, making something different out of their lives. And that’s if I were to say what I thought was wrong with a lot of students, it’s that they haven’t set that goal, and then they don’t have a way to envision themselves when they’ve achieved that goal.

Mason views support as the key ingredient for helping students transition successfully.

She stated unequivocally, “The support makes all the difference in the world.” Providing students with an identity was one important way of establishing the necessary support.

Mason sees it this way:

I think it's really good for them to have an identity. And when you get to Barone, you have a huge support. You have college graduates [that] have done great things, and they're all coming back. That's why it's Barone now instead of IMG because Barone went there and did something great. All these people that did are willing to put their name on the line. I'm willing to have this person work in my business as well as I know they have this excellent education. So there's a whole different support group. It's a little bit like a fraternity.

VanHouten provided the faculty perspective. As a newly hired physical sciences instructor, he was interested in “energizing the engineering program.” When asked about the role transfer students had played in the development of the partnership, VanHouten explained the curricular implications related to the engineering program as follows:

The transition, that's kind of the main thing about the whole partnership. Going to Barone anyway...The key here is that because we are such a small, inner community school, that we don't have that many students. So the whole key is physics is only offered in the fall; statics is only offered in the fall. So you wanta make sure that they're there with their math skills to get in sequence. So that was the main thing that the partnership, for me as an instructor, is getting these students to the class when they need to be so they're not here three extra years or two extra years because “oh, I didn't get physics in the fall so now I have to wait a whole nother year.” And that could be the only class they need or it could be based on a sequence of classes that they would have to finish up. So that was the key thing right there, just sequencing of classes.

Because of the absolute necessity of adequate preparation and careful sequencing, VanHouten emphasized the importance of careful advising, a responsibility that he now had as a result of the partnership. He opined that faculty were better suited to do the academic advising than were the advisors because it was “not their area of training.” In

further explicating his involvement with the partnership, VanHouten stated, “You want things to work out for yourself and for the student. I mean, my main goal is to make sure that the students [are] at the level where they can go to a four-year university.”

As we have seen, the originating factors that led to the development of the strategic partnership were much different for the two institutions. Once the decision was made to move ahead, however, there was nothing unique in the themes that emerged. Thus we will see that there are common threads throughout both the process story and the participants’ perceptions of outcomes two years after implementation of the partnership.

The Process Story

As we saw with Barone, establishing an arrangement as complex as the strategic partnership required considerable collaboration. The critical factors involved in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership include perceptions about common goals, the need for a champion, and the developing infrastructure.

Perceptions about common goals. The informants frequently mentioned the necessity of ensuring a seamless pathway for students in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree at Barone. Bosco, in recognizing the importance of going beyond articulation to ensure student success, talked about ways to do that. Specifically, he mentioned faculty interaction in which Barone faculty had a presence on Vader’s campus and whereby they became actively involved in the advising of students. To help them further identify with Barone, Vader students were invited to various activities on Barone’s campus. Thus in addition to having the benefit of advising, they also developed familiarity with Barone’s facilities and curricula. Familiarizing students with Barone and its offerings, though, was not enough. Bosco also spoke about the need to align curriculum:

It's always the fact of having to find out what changes have been made to that university's curriculum. And then changing ours to match...We want to make sure we're following the first two years of what they're wanting, but more importantly, it's really for that identity that the student has. And strengthen it. So however we can do that.

Small was also very clear about the importance of seamless transition, stating that he wanted to ensure that "students are well protected, that there can be a smooth transition from our institution to the transfer institution, and that students will not have the rug pulled out from under them academically." When asked specifically about what he had hoped to get out of the strategic partnership, he drew a comparison between simple articulation and the comprehensive partnership. He explained it this way:

What I hope to accomplish from and what I saw as a great promise is that this went beyond simply being an articulation, and what I saw as a great promise is that this went beyond simply being an articulation agreement. It wasn't just a 2 + 2. Indeed, depending on the major, there's not two years here. But it wasn't the typical 2 + 3 which would've been the case with Barone's five-year program. But it involved a real working together, thus not an agreement that was hammered out and that exists until we pitch it or revise it. But that it's hammered out, and then we continue to work in partnership. And I think the differences between the strategic partnership and simply the transfer or articulation agreement are relatively profound.

Russell too was in an important position to comment on the importance of working toward the same goal. As the transfer counselor, she was intimately concerned with issues of student success in the transfer process. In commenting on Barone's involvement, she said:

They really do want it to succeed, and they want to know what's going on and how we can do things more effectively to result in the students' making a decision and being successful at the four-year institution. I think that's the key component. You've gotta have people that care and that want to find out how to help students be successful.

She also spoke about the importance of faculty having similar goals and their efforts in helping students prepare for successful transition:

How many times do you see one of those Barone professors that are willing to come over to Vader and have dinner and break bread and talk to community college students, and tell them about the chemistry department? Or tell them about the math classes. It's really refreshing to have them do that. And, of course, some of them, we've found out, are quite humorous. And you know, some of them probably would've scared students to death. I mean, this is Barone. They're all so serious. But it has really made them approachable people...I think it's really important.

Russell also mentioned another common goal as an important incentive for the two institutions to partner. Because of the serious economic challenges inherent in their environment, Barone and Vader both deemed it important to show the community that they could work together. Doing so could result in tremendous benefits not only for students and the two institutions but also for their city and the surrounding communities.

As she explained:

There was a real desire between the president of Barone and Dr. Bosco, our president. I think this was something they really wanted to do. They wanted to show [the city] that we work together, that Vader and Barone are both interested in the residents of this community being able to succeed by attending both schools and getting what they need from Vader to be able to go on to Barone. I think that was one of the factors. There was a real goal of wanting to see that work.

VanHouten provided the faculty voice. In discussing his perception about common goals and the role they played in the early stages, he mentioned both the student issue and the community aspect. According to VanHouten:

Everybody in education, pretty much, is somewhat easy going...It's easy to work together with people that want the same goal or have the same goals...We kind of all had the same goals, wanted to build enrollment here, wanted to build enrollment there. At least in my perspective, that's what [we were working for]...I know there's a lot of community good will that they wanted to get for Vader and for Barone.

As with Barone, we have seen how the Vader participants held common goals, which was an important factor for the development of the strategic partnership. The appearance of an individual who could provide the impetus to move forward represents the second critical factor.

Need for a champion. Small spoke at length about the role Bardy, the organizational consultant hired by Barone, played in the development of the partnership. It was Bardy who made the initial contact, wanting to meet with him in his capacity as an administrator in the academic office. Others were soon brought into the conversation including the associate dean for science and math; faculty from math, chemistry, and physics; and the administrator from student services. With Bardy's direction and guidance, they began operationalizing various aspects of the partnership. Both presidents had approved it in concept; now it was time to do what was necessary to, as Small put it, "make this happen."

Small explained Bardy's involvement in carrying out the action strategies. He played a key role in setting up the early exploratory meetings. These were held on Vader's campus and involved both administrators and faculty. He was also instrumental in organizing other activities on both campuses to encourage faculty interaction as well as continued dialogue among key administrators. As Small stated:

We have had faculty-to-faculty contact. We have had mutual events held together. Some of them involving state-wide or at least region-wide groups, manufacturing design, so forth; and we've also hosted on this campus—Barone people talking to Vader students. This is an avenue that Vader students frequently did not consider possible.

He also mentioned how the partnership was quite different from the other agreements that had been in place. He commented, "I think the cooperation and collaboration that goes

on all the time sets this aside from what are our usual, typical agreements. In the beginning, this is what I hoped for. That we could have that kind of relationship.” In speaking about the presidents’ involvement and the media coverage, he was emphatic about Bardy’s role: “Eventually the presidents came over [for a signing ceremony] and [we] had TV stations and whatever, and they signed the agreements. But it’s the nuts and bolts of the daily operation, and I cannot emphasize too much the important role Dr. Bardy played in all this.”

When asked what had fostered the ability of the two institutions to work together in the early stages, Small mentioned the leadership of both presidents, their willingness to work “in concert with each other,” and the importance of others also working together. He also gave credit where he felt it was due: “John Bardy is a very capable guy, and I think he was the lynchpin and took action with all of us.” Later in the interview, he spoke about the absence of competition and the presence of collaboration. Again, he credited Bardy and his ability to foster a collaborative environment:

I think I can say this without any exception. At no point in the discussions with Barone, was it ever competition. That we can work together. I hope that in planning the future, that kind of relationship can be developed with some other institutions and further developed with Barone. But that we sat down together and talked, and they certainly brought ideas that hadn’t occurred to me. But we talked and worked collaboratively. Again, I would credit John Bardy. He’s been very important to this. Worked collaboratively together. I think that can be done, and I think it’s very healthy. I think it really works. But I think it’s relatively rare.

Miller was similarly complimentary about Bardy but from another perspective. In speaking about his involvement in the early meetings, Miller mentioned Barone’s reputation as an incentive for working with them. He explained it this way: “Barone is very prestigious, and it would be nice for some of our students to go to a school like that.

Again, partnerships are a good thing, and Barone was really courting from what I could see.” In speaking specifically about Bardy, Miller mentioned his background in student affairs as reason for his credibility: “John Bardy seemed really knowledgeable. I guess he’s had a lot of community college experience. And I like to relate to him in particular because he seemed to understand a lot of the dynamics from the student affairs perspective. I think he’s got a background in student affairs.”

Mason, when asked what she believed had contributed to the institutions’ ability to work together, mentioned both Morgan and Bardy. As Barone’s director of college transfer programs and the consultant respectively, both were in a unique position to spend considerable time and energy on the partnership. This did not go unnoticed by Mason. As she observed: “They were able to focus completely on this so they were able to trouble shoot early on, nurture, get it up high enough that, [if] the balloon started coming down a little bit, they could blow a little hot air in there. It didn’t just have it be an agreement quickly done. They did come back to nurture it.”

Developing infrastructure. With a champion in place to advance the common goals held by the Vader participants, we can start to see the emergence of a developing infrastructure. As we saw with Barone, conditions now were conducive for moving forward.

The support of top administration was deemed essential. As has been previously noted, Frank had the vision of increasing the number of transfer students, a heretofore untapped market for Barone. He found Bosco enthusiastically receptive and thus the process of developing the partnership started to unfold. When asked specifically what factors fostered the ability of the two institutions to work together, Bosco answered as

follows: “I think the key thing is the two presidents really have a desire to wanta make it happen and not just pay lip service to it.” Throughout his interview he sometimes compared the nature of the relationship with Barone to those with other institutions, which were typically fraught with challenges. He credited Frank with the positive nature of the Barone-Vader relationship, observing as follows:

Excuse me for saying it, but a traditional university approach, they’re above. But he’s not. And with all the degrees he has, all the experience he has, he’s a very common sense thinker, [a] very down-to-earth person. And so if any other things happen, it’s because he’s making it happen. And he’s reaching out and paying more than just lip service.

Small offered a different perspective when he was asked about the presidents’ involvement in the early stages. Although Barone was considered “a very fine institution,” it had pretty much existed in isolation, remaining separate from the community. Small believed that to be the result of its being a one-corporation “phenomenon,” serving only that individual corporation’s needs. As it evolved and eventually became Barone University, that philosophy changed; and the institution began reaching out into the community. It was as a part of those efforts that the presidents embraced the concept of the partnership. Small explained it this way: “I think that it was positive that those two personalities had similar interests. Dr. Bosco is a good listener, is very active in community liaison...so I think that helped things to go, and the fact that the presidents had talked—that then filtered down to Bruce Roberts at Barone and others.”

Other players also recognized the importance of top-level support for the developing infrastructure. When she was asked who had been involved in the early stages, Mason answered as follows: “I am sure this was done at the president’s level. President Frank and President Bosco, wanting to make this happen because otherwise it’s

not going to happen.” Similarly, Russell also acknowledged the importance of presidential support. As she explained it, “Initially, our president and their president were really the ones that wanted to see this work. By the time it gets down to my level, it’s more working with the students and making sure that they have the opportunity to be successful.”

Although support at the top was crucial, it was not the president who was actively involved with the development and implementation of the partnership. With Vader, as with Barone, it was typical for the president to delegate responsibilities associated with the partnership. Bosco explained it this way: “I may not know all the details, but that’s where if we didn’t have that detail, if somebody didn’t take on that role, if the vice president didn’t assign that and follow through, it’d be lost.” He spoke specifically about the process he used at Vader: “What I do is I give it back, and I take it to our academic vice president, and he takes it from there. And he’ll involve Stan Small, in the academic office, [and others]. Then they drive it to other faculty and the associate deans...I can’t make anything happen without other people getting excited.” Thus, as with Barone, we see that it is important to identify key contacts at each institution. As Bosco observed: “You make sure you have a contact person. I asked Tom Frank, ‘Who should we have our people work with [at Barone]?’...So really basically you have people understand who they coordinate with back and forth and talk to and make things happen.”

Small also spoke about the importance of bringing the right people together. In discussing the very early stages of development where “we would meet and explore and [feel] out what direction we could go in,” he specifically mentioned the involvement of Mason, the associate dean of science and math; Miller, the associate dean of counseling

and student development; a math faculty member, the director of admissions, and Russell, the transfer counselor. VanHouten came on board later. According to Small:

Adam [VanHouten] was sort of tapped by Barbara [Mason] as being, he was a new faculty member here, as being one who could move this. Maybe he would be the person cuz engineering was his area, and I think he has done an outstanding job. He was very proactive; he's been very cooperative. He has been a good face for Vader students, and working with Vader students and working with Barone as well.

When asked if he had concerns about the partnership once Bardy was no longer involved, Small answered this way, underscoring the importance of involving the right people:

Sure. I think people have been important in how this has evolved. Just as I think that if Barbara Mason were not here, I think if I were not here, this could provide a challenge I would hope would be momentary, but yeah, I think it would be a challenge [if Bardy were no longer involved]. But I think that both institutions have bought into it now, that it would not belly up. Both institutions know more about the other than they used to.

Miller, when asked who had the responsibility of moving the partnership forward, corroborated what Small had said. As he explained it: "My perspective, he picked up the responsibility, Stan Small. He was, as I recall, involved right from the start. My impression was that John Bardy was on his doorstep all the time, and Stan Small was on everybody else's doorstep here at the college."

As we saw with Barone, collaboration among both administrators and faculty within the college was essential in order to foster the necessary level of involvement. Again we see that common goals, encouragement to take risks, and collegial leadership provided the appropriate climate for the partnership to develop.

As mentioned previously, support was generated at the presidential level and delegated as appropriate to top- and mid-level managers. Without faculty buy-in, however, the partnership was doomed to failure. As Bosco bluntly put it, "If the faculty

does not want it to happen, it ain't gonna happen." Miller also spoke about the challenges faculty could present. He alluded to their lack of an external focus, when compared to administrators: "Knowing faculty as I do, faculty don't care. They're tenured; and unless the university declares a state of financial emergency, they don't worry about their jobs." When asked about the extent to which collaboration might result in increased risk taking, he again talked about faculty: "I think risk taking would've been what if the Barone faculty had dug in their heels on the transfer arrangements? Course recognition arrangements?" As mentioned earlier, faculty tend to be more inwardly focused in that their time is devoted to the issues inherent in teaching, learning, and curriculum.

Small similarly mentioned the quashing effect faculty could have because of their different perspectives. In describing some recent efforts to collaborate with another four-year university, he talked about administrators being in concert but not faculty. As he stated, "We can make arrangements with [the other university], administratively, for things that we think are really good and then have them torpedoed by faculty. This has happened repeatedly. And so that has been problematic."

All of these observations notwithstanding, Russell was able to offer a varied perspective. Something was different in the Vader-Barone partnership. Alluding to the common goals, she observed as follows:

I think one of the things that the partnership has done, it has made it easier for Jim Morgan to come over here and to set up times in classrooms and get faculty to take away from their classroom agendas to let students know what opportunities are available at Barone. The Barone people are willing to come and make sure that our students and our faculty know where the future is going. What they see for the technical field as well as the computer field.

She also inferred the benefits of collegial leadership in collaborative endeavors, noting:

I think it's really been refreshing for Vader to see what a good partnership and working relationship we have had with the faculty and the staff and the administrators, because that doesn't always happen with four-year institutions. Some that you might think would be dying to work with the community college more. It hasn't happened.

Mason spoke about the importance of understanding each other's institution as a condition for working out the issues and challenges once the decision was made to partner. When asked what facilitated the ability of the two institutions to work together at this point, she answered, "You have people that have known each other and worked together over time, in the two institutions, so there's a personal knowledge and awareness of how things go. And then there has to be long-term respect between the institutions themselves."

Small also commented on differences he had observed as the partnership evolved. Surprisingly, they had to do with faculty and how they now approached things differently. According to Small:

There wasn't any [dialoguing] going on before. One of the things that has come of this is that Barone is keeping us informed. They're now inviting us to their professional development activities for faculty. I think we have done that reciprocally. One of our faculty conducted a session for them in the past several months. Psychologist here. So there is more exchange.

When asked what he felt should be the next step for the partnership (two years after implementation), he answered as follows:

I think the next step for me is to explore other ways that we can work together. The foreign language [possibility], what can be done with the community. What we can do for Barone students. Furthering the faculty interconnections and sharing our resources. By that I don't mean fiscal resources. I mean human resources and whatever kinds of other resources.

To understand the developing infrastructure, we have looked at top-level support, key contacts, and collaboration among administrators and faculty. It is also informative,

as we did with the Barone participants, to briefly consider the energizing forces that were at work. VanHouten provided the important faculty perspective in answering a question about creativity coming from the partnership. His comments allude to the benefit of looking externally as well as to the effects of synergy:

Creativity? It just kinda gets you to think. I've been doing a physics discipline review at the same time [that I've been associated with the partnership], so I just think of what other schools are doing, look at that sort of thing. It makes you think, 'Oh, maybe I could do this or do that.' So it does stimulate some thought.

Bosco, as president, naturally exemplified that external focus. In reflecting upon the development and implementation of the partnership, he had much to say about energizing factors. Specifically, he mentioned weekly cabinet meetings "where we sit around the table and throw out ideas." If there was consensus that a particular project, such as the partnership, was worth pursuing, several elements were critical for its success. According to Bosco, "You have to have the right people who take an interest in it, who have a passion in it." Recognizing the critical importance of faculty buy-in, he also said, "In any higher education institution, you're not gonna have anything like this happen unless you have your academic department, instructional unit, give its blessing." He also spoke convincingly about the need to motivate and the importance of collegial leadership, offering both the vice president of academic services and the vice president of student services as exemplars. He explained it this way:

That's part of leadership. You have to have that passion. Dream. We've always dreamed of having things like this happen. It's not gonna happen to the fullest extent unless there is that passion and excitement about what will happen.

When asked to comment on his leadership style, he said:

One of the things I value is I want everybody to speak their mind...They understand that I make the final decision, but that I respect their thoughts...Trust that everybody wants to do a good job...Support is not always in dollar amounts. It can be just being there and supporting them, with your attendance or the fact that you listen to them. Get excited about their ideas...It's a lot of common sense. I'm not an expert. But just listen and trust, and it doesn't mean that don't oversee or verify or ask a lot of questions. But if you find things are happening, then you jump in. But I know that that's the kind of leadership that I like and I've always had from CEOs. I've had the autocratic ones, the micro-manager ones. I thought 'what a waste.' That's what I envision I am.

The story of how the strategic partnership was envisioned, developed, and implemented would not be complete without taking a look at the outcomes as seen through the eyes of the Vader players. Where did they see the partnership going? What particular concerns might they have?

As mentioned earlier, the partnership document included language about the frequency of review—"every two years." At the time of the semi-structured interviews, the partnership had been in place for almost exactly two years. Thus it was time for "review by the partners."

Outcomes as Seen by the Participants

The Vader players did not have the same concerns with increasing the number of transfer students or with issues of accountability as had the Barone informants. They did, nevertheless, provide valuable insight into its expected evolution and expressed optimism about its sustainability.

Expected evolution. According to Bosco, community colleges were frequently involved in collaborative endeavors; partnerships were certainly nothing new. He intimated that some partnerships could actually be detrimental. However, most institutions had had enough experience with the undesirable ones so that they now "know

what to stay away from.” In elaborating further, he stated, “More important, I think, it’s an entrepreneurial spirit that we’re not afraid of getting into something new. The more experience you have, the more able you are to say, ‘Yeah, we’d do that.’ But you understand what your limits are and what constitutes the elements of going into a collaboration or a partnership.”

He spoke specifically about the benefits of partnering with an institution of Barone’s caliber: greater ability to obtain grants as well as additional articulations and partnerships. It boded well for the future. As he stated, “It’s a status symbol now...The whole thing is centered around giving the best advantage to our students...I’m just so pleased with the trust level that we have. We’re doing it for all the right reasons.”

In reference to its being time for review, Small said that the partnership was “not old enough that I could talk much about evolution. I would instead talk about nurturing.” He clarified, though, that “certainly [there were] no negative outcomes” and that it had evolved as he thought it would. He opined as follows: “I hope that it continues to grow stronger, and I’m excited about this potential for expanding into our doing something that has a community impact.”

Mason also mentioned the need to nurture, drawing an analogy between the current status of the partnership with that of a garden. She explained its fragility in this way: “So right now, it’s positive. It could just as easily be negative if we don’t nurture it.” She also spoke about the need for accountability as the partnership evolved. According to Mason, “You have to hold yourself open for some sort of public evaluation. You really do have to get the data, and you really do have to look at it.”

VanHouten was similarly cognizant of the desirability of increasing the number of students associated with the partnership. In viewing the situation macroscopically, he was able to identify a way to take some of the pressure off the community college. He explained it this way:

We are getting some students, and we've really learned that we should probably be hitting the high schools a little bit harder. [We should be] taking our show on the road a little bit...If we really want to build this program up, it really doesn't start here at the community college. The community college is the middle step. We really need to get high school students involved.

In addition to commenting on the expected evolution of the strategic partnership, the informants also shared their perceptions about outcomes two years after inception. In so doing, they addressed the issue of sustainability and alluded to the dynamic nature of the partnership in ways similar to those of the Barone participants.

Perceptions. Although the participants voiced concern about sustainability, it was not to the same degree as with the Barone informants. It was variously expressed as the necessity of a plan and the continuing need for a champion. When asked what he felt the next step for the partnership should be, Miller answered this way: "Probably two steps. One is developing [a] plan for the longer term, sustaining the partnership. If John Bardy disappears...who's gonna be carrying that? Maybe Barbara [Mason]." He had earlier described Bardy as "an energy flow," "on the doorstep all the time, but he doesn't offend you when he's on the doorstep."

Mason provided a somewhat different perspective about what might sustain the partnership. When asked what she thought would be of value to future institutional planners, she explicated as follows:

You have to talk with the person you're partnering with on a regular basis, and there has to be meetings, even if they're just the linen table cloth meetings. Those are very important. You have to know people as people, and you have to know the project and its professional sense as well. So you feel an obligation to the program both because of its highly professional, going-to-make-something-happen-for-the-kids things as well as 'I really like these people for who they are.' And it's okay if we just get together and have cookies and talk about how things are, even though nothing more important than becoming acquainted with each other happened. You have to value that too.

Miller, when asked that question, answered this way: "You need a person at each institution, below the higher executive level, committed to driving it, to operationalize it. And so what I learned is not to underestimate the potential of the students to go to other prestigious schools." It is interesting to note that in anticipating the future, his answer reflects the process that was actually used for development and implementation at both institutions.

Bosco viewed the future with optimism. He opined as follows: "It's gonna grow. All the elements for success are there. But again, it needs to be watched over by all of us. On both sides. And particularly [since] there's gonna be a change in CEO. We've gotta be just mindful."

As might be expected, those at the community college mentioned benefits to the community resulting from the partnership. VanHouten expressed his opinion about the positive aspects in this way: "I think our success for both our schools is in the community. People see, okay, hey, these guys are working together. They have the same goals. It looks really good to the community. I think that's what our success really is, is in the eyes of the community itself."

The benefits to students certainly did not go unnoticed. In fact, it was a common thread throughout the interviews. Russell observed as follows:

I think that there are more students that have been made aware that Barone is a very viable option for them as far as a transfer institution. They are right here in our fair city and that it's a doable option that they should consider. I would say that's probably one of the things that ...all this information and exchange of ideas and a chance to meet instructors at Barone has meant for our students.

Interestingly, Miller mentioned that the partnership had been better than he thought it would be. Initially, though, he was "not too optimistic." In fact, he unabashedly admitted that he had been quite pessimistic, not only in regard to students but also to faculty. As he explained:

I had a more pessimistic view of the ability of the students. I had a more pessimistic view of the willingness of the faculty to get involved. I still think it's probably pretty modest, but it's significantly better than I thought it would ever be. I thought it might topple on its face after a year or two just for lack of students, lack of interest. But that hasn't happened.

Now, as we concluded the Barone story with words from Frank, its president, so too will we end the Vader story with an observation from Bosco:

I don't know if Vader has changed [as a result of this joint undertaking]. Because we've always—just like most community colleges, one of the things we do so well is partner. We have hundreds of partners throughout the whole community. That's what really makes the strength of the community college. So I don't know if we've changed per se. Have we felt better about ourselves? Sure. We've grown a little bit taller in stature because of the respect that we may have gained from it. Sure we have. Internally and externally.

In summary, the story of the development and implementation of the strategic partnership suggests that the presence of certain conditions facilitates collaborative efforts within and between institutions. Specifically, we can identify those as a shared environment fraught with challenges, common goals held by both institutions, an interdependency that encourages institutions to work together, the presence of leaders

with vision who are willing to take risks, the “right” people who are willing to commit to the undertaking, and the existence of a collaborative attitude.

In further considering the collaborative undertaking, we will remember that emerging themes naturally fell into three categories: originating factors, the process story, and outcomes two years after inception. It is interesting to note that although the originating factors were different for the two institutions, the themes that emerged during the process story and outcomes assessment were remarkably similar.

We have seen that the originating factors for Barone included increased competition, a heretofore untapped market, and changing institutional perspectives. In contrast, for Vader they were a changing technological society, attention to the first two years of a baccalaureate program, and issues related to student development. The common themes that emerged in the process story included perceptions about common goals, the need for a champion, and the developing infrastructure. Those that emerged, for both institutions, during the outcomes assessment included the expected evolution and participants’ perceptions.

Thus we have seen that developing and implementing a collaborative endeavor, while deemed worthwhile, is not without its challenges. Before we turn our attention to the conclusions discussed in Chapter 5, let’s consider to what extent the research questions have been answered.

Section 2: The Extent to Which the Research Questions Have Been Answered by the Data

This study was designed to examine the conditions that contribute to strategic partnerships, the issues and challenges partnering institutions face, and why stakeholders continue to invest time and energy in the strategic partnership. Its purpose was then to

understand interinstitutional collaboration as a new organizational arrangement to determine what fosters its development, what facilitates its implementation, what are the appropriate outcomes, and what are its measures of success.

Using data drawn from a private, four-year university and a public, state-supported community college, I posed the following four questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?
3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?
4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together? (This assessment will be made to the extent possible given that the strategic partnership included in this study will have been in existence for only two years.)

Let us now consider each one individually as we seek to determine to what extent they have been answered.

1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?

Informants at both institutions were asked about the role of environmental factors in the early stages of the partnership; i.e., pre-negotiation or problem-setting. In particular, they responded to questions about what they hoped to get out of it; what role concern about transfer students, articulation agreements, state employment needs, or anything else might have played; institutional incentives for partnering; and the factors that facilitated their ability to work together in the early stages.

Barone participants were given a clear mandate by their president: to increase the number of transfer students. Frank had been at Barone for more than a decade when talk of the partnership first arose. As a former dean of engineering at an East Coast university, he had been intimately involved in issues related to transfer students. He had, in fact, forged articulation agreements in engineering with the community colleges in the state. But it was only after he was presented with a position paper outlining the advantages of a strategic partnership did he embrace the concept for Barone. He began an aggressive plan of action that involved the commitment of considerable time, effort, and resources. He was so committed to the concept that he hired an organizational consultant, a director of college transfer partnerships, and an executive director of enrollment services.

Transfer students represented a virtually unknown population. Although administrators bought into the concept early on, faculty presented more of a challenge. They were used to the traditional student population: 18- and 19-year olds who had graduated at the top of their high school classes. Not only did they have concerns about a non-traditional group of students, they also were reluctant to review their courses for equivalency, an essential component to smooth transition.

The Vader players were less divided. In fact, consensus was that the partnership represented a wonderful opportunity for their students. Another important driver was the difficulties they had routinely experienced in trying to work with another four-year university. The fact that Barone came “wooing” with plans designed not only to benefit students, but also both institutions and the community as well, was especially attractive. Although the administrator in the academic office initially believed that “students

couldn't get in, and even if they did, they couldn't afford it," he was willing to do what was necessary to get the partnership started.

The participants generally mentioned the frequency of meetings and the role of the organizational consultant as salient features at the inception of the partnership. They also mentioned their changing perspectives as they worked with others to move the partnership forward.

2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?

The informants were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their beliefs about what had been important at the next phase of working together, i.e., negotiation or direction-setting. Specifically, they were asked questions about who was involved in the development of the partnership, the institution's involvement as the partnership got underway, who was responsible for moving it forward as well as giving final approval, and what factors facilitated their ability to work together at this stage.

As mentioned above, Barone's president retained the services of an organizational consultant. As the former dean of students at a Midwestern community college and co-chair of a design and manufacturing association, he was uniquely qualified to advance the strategies of the partnership. Also of great significance was the fact that he had been the primary writer of the position paper outlining the strategic partnership; thus he was well versed in the issues. Coming out of retirement to accept Frank's offer to develop and implement the partnership, he also had the necessary time to devote to the undertaking. Add to that the fact that he had a wealth of contacts on which to call and you will understand what a credible source he truly was.

The Barone informants all mentioned how influential Bardy had been in bringing them together. He seemed to have a knack for getting the right people to the table and setting the stage for getting things accomplished. He set up numerous meetings, ran them in a congenial way, and followed up with meeting notes and suggested next steps. All spoke very favorably of him as an individual and of his ability to move the process along. Thus they had a clear understanding of what had to happen through the various stages of development.

Similarly, the Vader players also spoke highly of Bardy. Once he had mobilized the Barone people, he turned his attention to Vader. Accompanied by key administrators, he went to Vader's campus to explore the opportunities for partnering. This was a different scenario indeed, for they were used to a more elitist attitude in dealing with another four-year institution in the area. The Vader informants mentioned the interactive nature of their dialogues with those from Barone. It was not a situation where one institution was trying to tell the other what to do. Instead, they approached the various issues and challenges jointly.

3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?

The informants were asked for their perceptions about what had happened since the formal decision was made to partner; i.e., implementation. In particular, they were questioned about possible changes to the partnership; the extent to which the partnership had evolved as they had thought it would; and their perceptions about outcomes, anticipated or not.

The Barone administrators all expressed concern with the considerable time and effort required by the partnership. Although responsibilities had been reassigned and

new people had been brought on board, it remained a frequently voiced concern throughout their interviews. The participants also wondered about what would happen when and if the consultant were no longer involved. They did mention, however, that there were now fewer meetings and that it was important to maintain the momentum that had been established. They remained concerned with the need to generate an increase in the number of transfer students. All spoke positively about the many reasons, diversity among them, to have more transfer students at Barone. Faculty also seemed to be far less resistant, some even enthusiastic, about working with transfer students. They now understood that those students did as well as, if not better, than native students in persisting through their various programs.

The Vader informants were quite enthusiastic in their assessment of the partnership two years after inception. They spoke about the many positive aspects of working together—players had become familiar with each others' campuses, programs, and students. They perceived the benefits to be substantial, not only for students but also for both institutions and the surrounding communities. They held high hopes for the continuance of this partnership and foretold of applying lessons learned about working together to other contexts.

4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together? (This assessment will be made to the extent possible given that the strategic partnership included in this study will have been in existence for only two years.)

The participants were asked to speculate about where they saw the partnership going, what lessons had been learned, and what the next steps should be; i.e., renegotiation. Specifically, they were asked how effective the partnership had been in fulfilling its goals; how the institution had changed; the ways in which collaborative

efforts might contribute to institutional effectiveness and success; how collaboration might result in increased risk taking, creativity, and/or satisfaction; next steps; and lessons learned.

The Barone informants were guardedly optimistic. As mentioned previously, they were concerned with substantially increasing the number of transfer students. The president spoke clearly about this; many of his staff echoed his concerns. The point was made, though, that the partnership had only been in existence for two years. Students at Vader had to prepare for transfer to Barone. That, of course, took time. Perhaps indirect measures could be used as success indicators. Many of the informants did speak of increased awareness of Barone in the community. Now there was name recognition where before there had not been. Students and their parents now routinely visited Barone to find out more about the opportunities that might exist for them. The thought was that the partnership was working and that the Barone-Vader partnership could indeed serve as a model for establishing partnerships with other community colleges.

Those at Vader were without exception optimistic. They appreciated the efforts Barone had made in approaching them for the obvious advantages it afforded their students. They were pleased to realize that Barone viewed their students as capable and "worthy." In working together, the Vader players also seemed to develop a greater understanding of their various roles and responsibilities on behalf of serving students and a deeper appreciation of personal relationships.

We have seen how environmental factors set the stage for the two institutions to work together. Clearly encouraged by top-level administrators at both institutions and empowered by the organizational consultant, the players set about working together to

develop and implement the strategic partnership. In so doing, they collaborated to achieve a clearly articulated common goal—to ease transition for students in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree in rigorous curricula. As the collaborative process unfolded, interdependencies were formed, resistance was overcome, and players unequivocally voiced optimism for the future of the partnership.

Two years after inception of the partnership, the issue of numbers is, of course, salient. We might wonder about the institutions' willingness to continue to invest time and energy in the strategic partnership. What if the numbers do not substantially increase?

While the partnership is in large part designed to “provide greater opportunity and exceptional academic and career development support for their current and potential students,” another important piece is to “jointly involve Vader Community College and Barone University with the community” (*A Statement of Strategic Partnership between Vader Community College and Barone University*, 2003). Now that the student development piece is in place, time and energy can be devoted to community outreach. Many of the players spoke about the importance of working together not only to benefit students but also the community.

Barone now has a new president who has pledged to strengthen the engineering school's role in the community. In fact, as part of his introduction, he emphasized Barone's role “in civic life and as an asset to the local business community” (*Blank Journal Editorial*, 2005). Barone's highly acclaimed applied engineering expertise could well foster business-sponsored research on or near campus, potentially encouraging inventors and entrepreneurs to work with faculty and students. In an effort to facilitate

such collaboration, Frank is concentrating his last few months on securing support for biotechnology as well as Barone's new fuel-cell research lab. Rare for an engineering school, the lab is designed to study uses for this new power source; additionally, it is organizing to act as an incubator for businesses hoping to utilize fuel cells for commercial purposes (*Blank Journal Editorial*, 2005). Such developments should ensure the two institutions' willingness to continue to work together in the interest of their students and the community, not to mention for their own viability.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Higher education is faced with unprecedented challenges at the advent of the 21st century. Our current economic climate, exacerbated by state and federal funding cuts, competition for students, demands for accountability, and changing student demographics promulgate a reconceptualization of the higher education system. The trends of the last three decades unquestionably underscore the necessity of new approaches to educating our citizenry. Only 30 years ago colleges and universities struggled in isolation to increase access to meet growing demand. Twenty years ago articulation provided the impetus for institutions to explore issues of access and quality with one another. Then, slightly over a decade ago, collaboration appeared on the higher education landscape. Operationalized in comprehensive partnerships, the trend shows no sign of abating in the early stages of the 21st century (Schaier-Peleg & Donovan, 1998).

Collaborative efforts, as evidenced by strategic partnerships, appear to have great potential for increasing effectiveness and efficiency in the fiscally constrained environment of higher education. However, they represent a new organizational arrangement about which we know very little. It thus becomes helpful to consider the conditions that encourage collaboration within and between institutions.

The purpose of this study was to understand this emerging form of interinstitutional collaboration to determine what fosters its development, what facilitates its implementation, what are the appropriate outcomes, and what are its

measures of success. Using a database consisting of a private four-year university and a public community college, I asked the following questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?
3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?
4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together? (This assessment will be made to the extent possible given that the strategic partnership included in this study will have been in existence for only two years.)

The findings suggest that several factors led to the perceived success of this collaborative undertaking: a strong impetus for collaboration, the ability to create interdependence between the participating institutions, and an appreciation of the dynamic nature of these collaborative undertakings. Although these findings are congruent with prior research (Wilbur, 1996), they do add important new dimensions—including the need for a champion and fostering a more collaborative attitude among faculty—that have implications for educational practice and policy as well as future research.

In discussing my findings, I will present what I have come to understand as a multi-layered story. This story consists of three parts. In the first part, we will return to the distinction, introduced in Chapter 1, between an alliance and a strategic partnership. We will next turn our attention to the story of how the strategic partnership developed,

drawing on the salient theories for help in understanding how the process unfolded. Last, we will consider the important implications for both faculty and the institutions involved.

Distinction Between an Alliance and a Strategic Partnership

Collaboration represents a relatively new response to the extraordinary challenges now facing higher education in our resource-constrained environment. As mentioned in the review of the literature, the conceptualization of collaborative efforts varies widely; little consensus on core characteristics has emerged. Some view collaboration as very focused, involving little more than cross listing courses among institutions or joining two or more degree programs. To others, it entails new thinking, new forms of communication, and new structures. Certainly it is the latter perspective that is salient for my study.

Alliances are far looser than strategic partnerships. In fact, Martin and Samels (2002), in advocating strategic alliances as a response to the recent economic downturn, defined them as a temporary, focused set of covenants between two or more complementary learning institutions or a learning institution and a business organization.

Strategic partnerships, on the other hand, are designed to develop an integrated educational structure to serve the needs not only of students, but also the institutions, area business and industry, and the surrounding communities. They are far more all-encompassing than are alliances for they are designed to foster healthy integration among several major sectors of society. As with any innovation, they are ambiguous and complex; it is hoped that this study can begin to frame an adequate, working definition. As a form of organizational change, we

must recognize that the process is slow and fraught with challenges, especially in higher education.

Strategic partnerships, as a new organizational arrangement, represent only one type of collaborative effort. Since the literature does not offer a clear definition, I resorted to dictionary definitions of “alliance,” “partnership,” and “strategic,” drawing on the relevant pieces from each one. The definition that emerged, mentioned in Chapter 1, is as follows: *A strategic partnership is a legal relationship among parties having specified, joint rights and responsibilities as they work together to achieve common goals within an integrated whole.* I would suggest that this definition is reflected in my findings in that the informants spoke of their joint efforts in working together to guarantee the smooth transition of students. The strategic partnership does not end there, however. Now that the student development piece is in place, attention is being directed at other ways to strengthen ties with business and industry to support the surrounding communities.

The organizational consultant, John Bardy, provided invaluable insight into the nature of the strategic partnership as a unique form of collaboration. Not only was his conceptualization informed by practical experience but also by theoretical understanding. Having served as both dean of students, with roles in co-op and corporate services at a Midwestern community college, as well as co-chair of a design and manufacturing alliance, he was instrumental in identifying student development issues and forging relationships among key stakeholders. Additionally, he held a Ph.D. from a major research university, focusing on

organizational change for his dissertation. He certainly seemed to exemplify much of what Kanter identified as important in the innovation process. I found it interesting to return to his transcribed interview for support of my working definition. Let's take a closer look.

He clearly established that in his role of co-chair of the design and manufacturing alliance, and in conversation with key stakeholders, it was felt that:

The group of people who were involved in [the] articulation committee...were doing a relatively good job with the business of transfer of credits of core curriculum, of curriculum, creating curriculum transfer models...But we didn't see much conversation about the smooth transition of students from the community college to the university...One of the important things...for any strategic partnership, which would add a dimension to transfer relationships, would be to have the full support of top administration. So that even though the top administrators might not be actively involved, they would have to delegate it to a person who would represent the community college, would represent the university. So that really began this at a different level.

In addressing the difference between simple articulation and the strategic partnership, we can see reference to elements of my working definition of the strategic partnership mentioned above. Both are tightly structured and contractual in nature with prescribed roles and responsibilities, making them different from the more loosely structured alliances.

The strategic partnership, however, is designed to accomplish far more than simple articulation. According to Bardy:

What we were trying to do was go beyond that to talk in terms of strategic partnering rather than just to talk about articulation agreements...We were building on that foundation; we were assuming that that was already fairly decent. At least from my perspective as a community college administrator, Barone was one of the easier schools to work with in terms of what was being accepted although there were some problems with what Barone accepted...Strategic partnering is a new dimension.

Although improving the transition of students from the two- to the four-year institution is a worthy goal in and of itself, the strategic partnership is designed to address far more in the way of complex problems facing contemporary society. In speaking of the comprehensive nature of the strategic partnership and its potential for addressing the needs of business and industry and ultimately the state, Bardy explained it this way:

We had the responsibility to our students to see if they got where they wanted to be, whether that was being employed or whether it was moving onto the university...I knew that wasn't enough, that we had to also provide for that transition...That's a part of the reason I thought this was important that we do this. From an industry perspective, I kept hearing in the design and manufacturing alliance...that you have to create a rational infrastructure to support the needs of design and manufacturing. And if you don't, and if there aren't good people to do this, these jobs will go elsewhere. Well, it sounds like what [the Governor] is saying...What was new about it was to get a university that was interested in accepting the challenge. From a community college perspective, it was always my feeling that if I can get the university to support the students that want to go there, I didn't have to worry about it.

He also spoke of the importance of team building in establishing a climate for working together:

The team pretty much was one Barone team and then what we encouraged community colleges to identify a similar group. The group was not the same at every community college. In some cases it went more through the academic side, and in some cases it went more through the student services side...And in each case, we asked someone to identify key contact people...It wasn't my role to represent the university. What I tried to do was make sure enough people at the university believed in this, to be able to make this a working relationship over time.

Lastly, Bardy specifically mentioned the integrative nature of the strategic partnership and its potential value:

This is much broader than just the smooth transition of students. It's the issue of faculty collaboration. Among other things—going back to the design and manufacturing alliance [and the expressed need] to create a rational educational infrastructure to support design and manufacturing. Then it has to involve a collaborative working relationship of schools.

What we're talking about here is—we're primarily about community college/university working relationships, but the strategy is a rational education infrastructure to support design and manufacturing.

I think that resources are too limited for institutions not to work together. And again, our philosophy with the design and manufacturing alliance is that if institutions do not work together, then the industry will not be properly supported; and if the industry is not properly supported, they'll go elsewhere. So that we're ultimately talking about economics and competitiveness, world competitiveness. So it's very important. And from a community perspective, typically in a community like this one, where you really do need to develop some new industries.

Thus we can see that the strategic partnership involved a commitment to a vision, not just for the institutions involved, but more broadly for society as well. Let us now turn our attention to a discussion of how it came about.

How the Strategic Partnership Came About

I will provide an overview of the theories that are relevant and important to my study. Negotiated order theory and Kanter's theory of innovation are especially salient given the results of the case study. I will then follow the theoretical overview with an application to the results.

Negotiated Order Theory

Negotiated order theory can be viewed as a metaphorical approach to social organization (Fine, 1984). It is concerned with examining how social structures are processed and how social processes become structured by means of human negotiation (Basu, Dirsmith, & Gupta, 1999). Because I was interested in the "actors, tactics, and subprocesses of negotiation and its consequences" (Strauss, 1978, p. 239), negotiated order theory is presented as the overarching framework for understanding the development and implementation of the strategic partnership inherent in my case study.

Fine (1984) gives special attention to Strauss's work in describing the central elements of negotiated order. First, organization is impossible without some form of negotiation. Second, specific negotiations are contingent upon the structural conditions of the organization. Negotiations are patterned, not random, in that they follow lines of communication. Third, negotiations have time limits; they are revised, renewed, and reconstituted as time passes. Fourth, structural changes in the organization require a revision of the negotiated order. That is, the structure of the organization and the micropolitics of the organization are intertwined.

To more fully understand the negotiation context of my study, it is helpful to return to Strauss's explanation. As discussed as part of the literature review (page 28), he suggests that any negotiation context will exhibit some combination of eight properties. In examining the interactions within and between two organizations in the development and implementation of a strategic partnership, Strauss's list is informative in identifying the elements that influenced the negotiation context of my study. The following four properties are especially salient:

1. The number of negotiators, their relative experience in negotiating, and whom they represent.
2. Whether the negotiations are one-shot, repeated, sequential, serial, multiple, or linked.
3. The relative balance of power exhibited by the respective parties in the negotiation itself.
4. The clarity of the legitimacy boundaries of the issues negotiated (1978, p. 238).

Let us take a closer look at how these properties are exhibited in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership.

*The Number of Negotiators, Their Relative Experience in
Negotiating, and Whom They Represent*

The organizational consultant, variously described as a driver or lynchpin, was a key force in the development and implementation of the partnership. Retained by Barone University's president, he had significant connections not only in education but also in business and industry. Recently retired, he had been dean of students at a community college. As part of that position, he was responsible for cooperative education and involved in working with corporate sponsors for student placements. Thus he was uniquely positioned to approach Vader Community College in the exploratory stages of the partnership. In addition to having the solid backing of Barone's president, he also was good friends with the senior administrator in enrollment services. Backed by considerable resources, these two individuals, well-versed in the intricacies of negotiation, set about advancing Barone's plan to partner with select community colleges.

Interestingly, Vader's administrator in the academic office who played an integral role in deciding whom to "invite to the table" was initially resistant, believing that Vader students could not get into Barone, and if they were admitted, they would not be able to afford it. A broad thinker, though, he soon saw the advantages for students. As he observed, "It involved a real working together, thus not an agreement that was hammered out and that exists until we pitch it or revise it. But that it's hammered out and then we continue to work in partnership. I think the differences between strategic partnerships and simply the transfer or articulation agreements are relatively profound."

*Whether the Negotiations Are One-Shot, Repeated,
Sequential, Serial, Multiple, or Linked*

The negotiations can be seen to be repeated, sequential, multiple, and linked. Once the organizational consultant was affiliated with Barone, he continued his work with the top-level administrator in enrollment services to operationalize the action strategies of the strategic partnership. Two new administrators were hired and others were reassigned. Seemingly tireless, the consultant mobilized the Barone players. After a good deal of brainstorming throughout frequently held meetings, they were ready to approach the first potential strategic partner. The organizational consultant, accompanied by the senior administrator of enrollment services, established contact with the administrator in the academic office at Vader Community College. In a key position to draw Vader players in, the administrator began setting up meetings on Vader's campus that were attended by both Barone and Vader stakeholders. Thus we see the importance of relationships and linkages in the negotiation context.

*The Relative Balance of Power Exhibited by the Respective
Parties in the Negotiation Itself*

It is interesting to note how Vader viewed Barone's approach in introducing the concept of the partnership. Accustomed to an elitist attitude exhibited by another four-year institution with whom they had tried to work, the Vader players were pleasantly surprised with the way that Barone came "wooing." Barone, in realizing that Vader offered a viable student population from which to recruit, was desirous of establishing a relationship that went far beyond the articulation agreements of the past.

Not surprisingly, Vader was receptive. After all, it was infinitely reassuring to have a premier engineering institution like Barone demonstrate confidence in Vader's

ability to prepare students for the rigorous curricula Barone offered. Mutually identified avenues of student support never before offered became a common goal. It certainly seemed to be a case of a relatively equal balance of power between the two institutions.

In fact, Vader's academic administrator explained it this way:

As the partnership evolved, I don't think Vader took a leadership [role], maybe Barone did a little bit, but it really was collaborative. They had experience. They'd been to Miami Dade, and I was aware that they weren't just talking to us. They were talking to MiSaba and Westbrook and so forth, Allen. But I think we worked collaboratively all along. They did not come here and impose a project that we could take or leave. That was not the approach.

The Clarity of the Legitimacy Boundaries of the Issues Negotiated

The boundaries of the issues negotiated can be seen to be permeable. Barone had not previously considered transfer students to be a viable population from which to recruit. In noting trends of community college attendance in light of increasing competition in a fiscally constrained environment, it changed its perception. Although administrators, with "one foot outside the institution and one foot in," embraced this changed perception with relative ease, faculty did not. Internally focused and used to dealing with a well-prepared, traditional student population, they primarily concerned themselves with issues of curriculum and pedagogy. Some faculty, though, were less autonomous and did see the wisdom of looking externally to ensure the viability of both their programs and their institution. The faculty informants at both Barone and Vader spoke at length not only about the need to review courses and curricula but also of the importance of growing their respective programs. To do so, they indicated the need to look externally, whether it was to ensure successful transition to the four-year university or to the world of work.

In further using negotiated order theory as a general framework for understanding the findings of this study, it is also helpful to consider the micro-macro dichotomy. For my study the negotiated limits of interest are the dyadic-level negotiations as they influence and are influenced by both organizational and societal elements. Further elucidation is possible through considering the micro-macro dichotomy; that is, the bifurcation between negotiations that occur among individuals (smaller-scale negotiations) and those that occur among larger social units such as organizations (larger-scale negotiations).

In writing about negotiated orders and organizational cultures, Fine (1984) asserts that both organizational approaches focus on the actor's perspective on life in an organization. Specifically, these approaches emphasize worker satisfaction and commitment and the non-economic, non-rational working of organizations. Additionally, members, as well as organizations, must pay attention to the constraints of their social and physical environments. They cannot effectuate change without being affected by those very changes; individuals operate within structures—of organizations and social worlds.

To continue, Fine explains that smaller-scale negotiations (those among individuals as a result of their individual strategies for adjustment) are primarily interpersonal. That is, “individuals shape their own actions in conformance with the structure, policies, and traditions of the social world around them—a real world, not one that is self-defined” (1983, p. 242). In larger-scale negotiations (those in which agents or representatives of collectivities are involved), individuals negotiate not only for themselves, but also for the organizational unit that they represent. Thus “although

individuals are ultimately doing the interacting, the negotiated order metaphor can be useful in understanding interorganizational relationships” (1983, p. 242).

To understand the interorganizational relationships between the private, four-year university and the public, two-year community college included in my case study, I sought relevant, pertinent information from the participants themselves. Interested in both the interpersonal aspects associated with smaller-scale negotiations as well as the dynamics associated with negotiating for one’s organizational unit; i.e., larger-scale negotiations, I interviewed six participants from each institution. Interviews lasted between one and two hours. My goal was to understand their individual perspectives on the development and implementation of a strategic partnership designed to go well beyond the standard articulation agreements that had been in place for years.

The organizational consultant, as both the originator and initiator of the strategic partnership, was instrumental in suggesting the appropriate people to interview on both campuses. Interviewees included faculty, administrators, and the presidents of both institutions. Without exception, all spoke positively of the development and implementation of the partnership and viewed its prospects for ultimate success in optimistic terms.

It is informative to replay the evolution of the partnership in light of Fine’s conception of smaller- and larger-scale negotiations. Doing so provides insights into how things get done and why things evolve. If the new organizational arrangement represented by the strategic partnership is determined to be worthwhile, lessons learned can then be applied in other contexts.

The innovative concept began with conversation between the two presidents who were desirous of advancing their institutions' respective standing among their stakeholders. Cognizant of both societal and organizational issues promulgating change in higher education, they sought potential remedies. Concurrently, the vice president of corporate relations and enrollment management at the university and the organizational consultant began working closely together. The idea of the strategic partnership was conceived and presented to the university's president. Embracing it fully, he shared it with the community college's president. Both college presidents then took steps to operationalize it by presenting it to their staffs who in turn shared it with appropriate personnel. The dyadic-level negotiations among the presidents, Barone's top-level administrator in enrollment services, the organizational consultant, and appropriate faculty and staff at both institutions can be seen to influence, and in turn be influenced by, both organizational and societal elements. Of no small significance, benefits accrue to both institutions; the surrounding community including employers; and, most important, to students. In further explaining why Vader was receptive to Barone's overtures, the academic administrator at Vader compared the developing relationship with Barone to the lack of relationship with another four-year institution in the area. He explained it this way: "They didn't grow and prosper as they had hoped so they simply started the freshman and sophomore year which did us great damage and fulfilled no benefit to the community. I think that...violated what [our well-known philanthropist] wanted when he gave the money, the mindset that...looks out for the welfare of others."

Let us now return to Gray (1989) and her conceptualization of negotiated order as a theory of negotiation to more fully understand the findings of this study. As discussed

in detail in the literature review, Gray describes a process-oriented approach for dealing with the complex problems inherent in our turbulent environment. Observing that many of our problems seem unsolvable because our perceptions of how to function in an increasingly interconnected world are limited, she suggests we adopt a different approach to achieve creative solutions. Specifically, she encourages us to view problems from perspectives outside of our own and to redesign our problem-solving strategies to include the various stakeholders who have an interest in the issue.

Building on the premise that in order to move the negotiation process forward we must know where we are in that process, Gray outlines a three-phase model of collaboration. It is predicated on the assumption that a fundamental set of issues must be addressed during the course of any collaboration. Depending on the nature of the particular collaboration, some phases may take on more significance than others. Her model of the collaborative process includes three major phases: (1) problem setting, (2) direction setting, and (3) implementation. Let us return to my case study, using Gray's framework as an informative lens for understanding the collaborative process inherent in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership.

The Problem-Setting Phase

The problem-setting phase, often the most difficult, is often referred to as pre-negotiation. It involves getting the key players to the table so that face-to-face discussion may begin. We can see Gray's steps are eminently informative in understanding this first phase of the collaborative process as demonstrated in the case study.

Common definition of the problem. This essential first step must be accomplished if subsequent efforts to collaborate are to be successful. Barone and Vader, although

approaching the problem from different perspectives, were able to define the problem in common terms. Barone, in recognizing that a virtually untapped student population was within a few miles of its campus, approached Vader, who recognized the advantages for its students of what Barone was offering. If more students could be adequately prepared for successful transition to and persistence through Barone's rigorous engineering and management programs, many stood to reap considerable benefit.

Commitment to collaborate. Having agreed on the problem, the Barone and Vader players recognized the potential for positive gain through joint exploration of the problem. Commitment from the top was deemed essential; of no small significance was the widely known fact that both presidents were in total support of the concept. Many brainstorming sessions were held, first internally at Barone followed by joint meetings at Vader.

Identification of the stakeholders. Since multiple sources of information are necessary for promoting as complete an understanding of the problem as possible, it is important to invite the right people to the table. The senior administrator responsible for enrollment services at Barone and the organizational consultant had a long-standing relationship. Faced with many of the same issues and concerns associated with technical and engineering curricula, they came together in an effort to address those issues. Supported by Barone's president, they were instrumental in inviting others to the table for exploration. As Vader's academic administrator explained, the organizational consultant first approached him; they soon "expanded the meeting to include the associate dean for science and math, a math faculty member, a chemistry faculty member, and importantly,

a physics faculty member. We also included our [student services administrator] and a few other people to be part of the conversation.”

Legitimacy of the stakeholders. Another important part of the process is involving those with a perceived right as well as the needed capacity to participate. Certainly, the organizational consultant was viewed in a favorable light. After all, he had been intimately involved in areas relevant to the proposed partnership throughout his long career in higher education. As the associate director of admissions at Barone observed, it was important that an outsider had come in to advance the partnership. Also, the academic administrator at Vader was forthright in asserting, “I cannot emphasize too much the important role Dr. Bardy played in all this.”

Convener characteristics. Since the role of the convener is to identify and bring all legitimate stakeholders to the table, persuasive powers are important. In this case, the organizational consultant can be seen as the convener. His persuasive powers were evident; all of the interviewees spoke positively about his ability to bring people together and move things along. He was a constant presence, both at Barone and at Vader. This fact notwithstanding, even though he was perceived by Vader’s academic administrator as “always on the doorstep,” he was viewed as the “the kind of person you don’t mind having on the doorstep.”

Identification of resources. Since the parties involved in this prenegotiation phase will incur costs, these must be anticipated and secured so that stakeholders may participate equally in the process. As previously mentioned, support of both presidents was a given. Barone not only retained the organizational consultant but also hired two additional administrators and reassigned others as needed. Similarly, Vader’s president

was clear in describing how he authorized his staff to do what was necessary in advancing the partnership. Also of great significance was the fact that the physical sciences faculty member was given released time to advise students included in the partnership. He was an active proponent of the strategic partnership, advocating its advantages where and as appropriate in his advising role with students not currently included in the partnership but academically qualified.

The Direction-Setting Phase

The tasks identified in the problem-setting phase, i.e., prenegotiation, are essential pre-conditions for the direction-setting phase. In this phase, the negotiation phase itself, stakeholders identify the issues that brought them together, discuss similarities and differences in those interests, and analyze the potential for eventual trade-offs. Let us take a closer look at how Gray's steps inform the collaborative process at this stage of the partnership's development.

Establishing the ground rules. Ground rules are essential for establishing appropriate behavior for interaction and for lessening the likelihood of misunderstandings. Here again we see that the top-level support provided by both institutions' presidents was instrumental in setting the stage for working together. A clear message had been sent about the desirability of developing and implementing a strategic partnership that would inure to the benefit of students, both institutions, and the greater community. The intricacies, though, of how that was to be accomplished was left to the creative devices of the players. Both the Barone and Vader informants spoke often about working together to meet the commonly identified goal of helping students. That

seemed to be the rallying point. They also mentioned the necessity of building and strengthening relationships to enable them to continue to work together.

Agenda setting. The substantive issues of the collaboration were established in a way that made the stakeholders feel as though their interests were adequately reflected. Courses and programs at both institutions required careful analysis. Changes were made in the curriculum at the community college so that students would be better prepared for successful transition to the university. A greater number of Barone courses were evaluated for possible equivalency with those at Vader. The agenda, though, did not end with attention to the typical academic issues addressed by articulation. Issues of student development surfaced and were appropriately addressed by the stakeholders, notably those in admissions and counseling.

Organizing subgroups. The organization of the collaborative process has an effect on the promotion of consensus. Since the number of agenda items was relatively large and broad sweeping, subgroups were formed. Supported in full by the president, the senior administrator in enrollment services, accompanied by the organizational consultant, made the initial contact at the community college. They worked in concert to introduce the concept and remained visible and active. Similarly, supported fully by his president, the academic administrator at Vader was in a key position to decide whom to bring into the conversation. Various responsibilities were assigned at the action level. Because the stakeholders shared a perception about common goals, they were able to address the important issues associated with academic as well as social integration in ensuring the smooth transition of students.

Joint information search. This task is necessary because stakeholders at both institutions realized that they did not have sufficient data. Because of the perceived benefits of the collaborative endeavor, the stakeholders at both institutions set about acquiring more information about each other's programs and campuses. Working together, they sought ways to increase awareness among Vader students of the feasibility of a Barone education. Toward that end, Vader's academic administrator spoke about faculty-to-faculty contact and mutual events involving state-wide or at regional groups, as well as hosting events on the community college's campus.

Exploring options. It is important to explore multiple options before deciding on one in particular. To fully appreciate the avenue taken to address this step in the process, it is helpful to consider the nature of the many meetings that took place. The initial ones involved only the Barone players. Once a plan had been developed, contact was made with Vader. Several meetings were held including players from both campuses; these meetings, though, routinely took place on Vader's campus. As the process unfolded, the Vader players met to work on various aspects associated with the partnership. As time went on, internal meetings involving only Barone or only Vader, as well as joint meetings, took place as needed. The varied nature of these meetings provided important opportunities for exploration.

Reaching agreement and closing the deal. The stakeholders were able to commit to a single option that was finalized in writing. After several months of working together, the players at both institutions were able to agree on the elements to include in the partnership document and how to begin to operationalize its various action strategies.

Implementation

Because carefully developed agreements can fall apart after the parties have forged an agreement, careful attention must be devoted to the final stage, that of implementation. Once more, let us return to Gray's identification of the issues important at this stage in an effort to understand the implementation of the strategic partnership.

Dealing with constituencies. Parties to the agreement must carefully explain aspects of the final agreement to the "back home" stakeholders. In this way, they can garner the support needed for implementation. Many of the participants repeatedly alluded to a perception of common goals and stressed the importance of good relationships. Although administrators appeared to have been in concert throughout development and implementation, it was evident that Barone faculty were initially resistant. As we will see later, though, this resistance was in large part overcome.

Building external support. Generally, those who forge the agreement are not those charged with implementation. It is paramount to have the support of those who will be actually involved in implementation. As has been previously mentioned, the players from both institutions were without exception supportive of the partnership and its associated goals. Some participants even acknowledged that although they had been skeptical initially, they had come to see the many significant advantages inherent in the partnership.

Structuring. Stakeholders must be cognizant of the effort required for successful implementation. Doing so requires consideration of the initial impetus for collaboration as well as the degree of organizational change required. The players certainly seemed to understand the initial impetus for the partnership. Although viewed from various

perspectives depending on the individual's institution and position, all voiced appreciation for an opportunity to work together in preparing students for meaningful careers. They recognized that in so doing, not only did students benefit but so did the institutions and community. They differed, though, in their perceptions about the degree of organizational change required. Those at Barone faced and ultimately embraced change; the Vader players really did not feel much change had taken place at their institution. We will return to this issue later.

Monitoring the agreement and ensuring compliance. Because the players could be seen as working together toward a common goal, issues of compliance were non-existent. However, as circumstances changed, renegotiation of certain aspects of the agreement were inevitable. In fact, as a living document, the agreement was subject to review every two years by the partners. Since the agreement had been in place for two years at the time of this study, plans were being made for an honest assessment of how well the partnership was doing what it had been designed to do.

In essence, Gray encourages us to reexamine how we organize to solve problems in contemporary society. Fundamental interdependencies now form the foundation of modern existence; traditional models that stress independence are no longer suitable for managing in a turbulent world. We need a new metaphor to help us understand what interdependence means. Specifically, she suggests that we replace the pioneering metaphor (i.e., rugged individualism in pursuit of one's own wants and desires) with a new metaphor emphasizing dynamic wholeness in which the parts of a whole are not distinct elements. Rather, individual parts derive their meaning in relation to other parts; change occurs as a reconfiguration of the entire set of relationships. Further, our present

values and styles of interacting, which emphasize independence, should be complemented with models that stress interdependence and complementarity. New, more collaborative interorganizational designs based on the principle of dynamic wholeness are far better suited for solving the complex problems now surfacing in our turbulent world.

To more fully understand these new, more collaborative interorganizational designs, exemplified by the strategic partnership, let us now turn our attention to Kanter's (1990) model of innovation as a framework for understanding what facilitates the innovative process.

Kanter's Model of Innovation

Kanter suggests that a dynamic model of innovation, which connects the major tasks in the innovation process—idea generation; coalition building; idea realization; and transfer, or diffusion—to the structural arrangements and social patterns which foster each, is necessary. It is important to note that these structural and social conditions vary throughout the innovation. Alluding to the micro-macro dichotomy, she provides the following helpful conceptualization:

Innovation consists of a set of tasks carried out at the micro-level by individuals and groups of individuals within an organization. These micro-processes are in turn stimulated, facilitated, and enhanced—or the opposite—by a set of macro-level conditions. Some of these structural and social factors are more important at certain stages than at others (1990, p. 277).

Her depiction of innovation as the “creation and exploitation of new ideas” (p. 278) is similarly informative. Organizational conditions, including structure and social arrangements, can produce and encourage innovation if they can accommodate the organic, often chaotic, nature of innovation and change.

I am particularly interested in her model as it pertains to administrative innovation in processes and systems that can be applied to my case study. Specifically, administrative innovation is more frequent when resources are scarce; process innovations are more common in established organizations. My case study involves established institutions attempting to do more than simply survive in the resource-constrained environment in which higher education now finds itself. Let's return to the case study and apply Kanter's model of innovation to more fully understand the development and implementation of the strategic partnership.

As previously discussed, the strategic partnership between Barone University and Vader Community College represents a new organizational arrangement about which we know very little. Although the presidents of the two institutions met regularly to discuss issues of mutual interest, it was not they who envisioned the interinstitutional collaboration exemplified by the partnership. Actually, the perceived partnership benefits were outlined in a strategic partnership document that was a product of the articulation committee of the design and manufacturing alliance. A consortium of universities, community colleges, high school districts, and employers, the members of the consortium were committed to developing an integrated educational structure to meet the needs of the design and manufacturing industry of [their region] (Varty & Nichols, 2002).

The co-chair of the alliance and the senior administrator responsible for enrollment services at Barone began discussing opportunities for working together via a strategic partnership. The innovative concept was introduced to Baron's president. Not surprisingly, he embraced it fully and committed substantial resources to the undertaking. The alliance co-chair was hired as an organizational consultant. Recently retired, he had

been a former dean of student affairs at a Midwestern community college and was also a long-standing friend of the Barone senior administrator in enrollment services. He had a wealth of contacts on which to call and valuable insights on which to draw for developing the partnership.

Interestingly, many of the properties Kanter identifies as important for the success of innovation in the *idea generation* stage are apparent in the early phase of the partnership. In particular, the social contacts that foster contact across boundaries, “kaleidoscopic thinking” that was instrumental in envisioning the partnership, increased interpersonal connectedness that the consultant could encourage through his many contacts, and organizational support for the innovation are salient.

Supported by Barone’s president, the top administrator for enrollment services and the organizational consultant set about garnering the necessary support within the university. The perceived benefits for Barone were substantial: increased transfer student access and success. Virtually an untapped and expanding market, the president’s goal was to increase the number of transfer students from the current 60+ to 100 within two years. Working together, the organizational consultant (an outsider) and the senior administrator (an insider) shared the visioning with Barone faculty and staff. The president’s support of the initiative was often mentioned. All did not go smoothly, however. Some, most notably faculty, were less than enthusiastic about the initiative. As members of a premier engineering university, they were reluctant to associate with the less prestigious community college. They voiced concern about the effect that transfer students might ultimately have on the institution’s reputation. Some faculty even encouraged students to protest to the president. After meeting with them in his office, the

president managed to assuage their concerns. Through frequent and open dialogue about transfer students' ability to do well academically and also for the diversity they offer, faculty eventually became for less resistant. The expressed reluctance about working with transfer students has since subsided.

Many of the properties that Kanter identifies as important in *coalition building* are equally evident at this point in the development. Specifically, in garnering support of faculty and staff, several power tools were utilized. Information was readily shared via planning meetings and addresses to the faculty senate; resources were committed as evidenced by hiring the consultant; and support was given in name and action from the outset. Interdependent relationships were fostered among faculty and staff, and open communication patterns were encouraged, as evidenced by the president's meeting with students concerned about the effects on their institution's reputation.

During this phase of the partnership, steps were taken to assemble a working team. Staff assignments were changed as necessary to accommodate the new emphasis on transfer students. New personnel were hired, including a director of college transfer partnerships and an executive director of enrollment services. The internal team now intact, it was time to reach externally.

Barone had determined that the formation of a few strategic partnerships with carefully selected community colleges could provide important benefits to several stakeholders. Not only would these benefits accrue to Barone, but also to the partnering community college, surrounding communities, employers, and, most important, to students themselves. Because of Vader's proximity, it seemed to be the most logical place to start. Equipped now with something tangible, Barone's president approached

Vader's, who was naturally receptive. Peter Bosco spoke with certainty about the incentives, from Vader's perspective, in working together:

The primary reason is for the student. The secondary reason is that it does elevate the status of Vader that we're in partnership with [an institution like Barone]. You have an extremely profuse global institution of higher education and we are aligned with them. So when we advertise the partnership that we have, in effect from a public relations point of view, it does help to elevate our image as well.

He elaborated further, when asked about the factors that had fostered the ability of the two institutions to work together:

The key thing is the two presidents really have a desire to want to make it happen and just not pay lip service to it. Second of all, you have that translate into having your administrators and faculty accepting that. And three, wanting to see it happen as well. At any point in time, you could have somebody stop it, and that's been done at lots of institutions. Even though the president may want to have something happen, it doesn't happen.

Now that the strategic partnership had been fully embraced by both presidents, key people at each institution began working together in earnest to develop the partnership. This initiative, begun in the year 2000, was brought to timely fruition with a formal signing ceremony less than two years later.

As with idea generation and coalition building, several of Kanter's properties can be identified in the *idea realization* stage. This stage involves several critical organizational issues in turning the idea into a tangible object. A key aspect is assembling a work team to complete the idea by turning it into a concrete object that can be transferred to others. Both structural and social conditions within the innovation team have an effect on success. "Continuity of personnel, up to some limits, is an innovation-supporting condition" (Kanter, 1990, p. 302). In particular, the organizational consultant played a dominant role in facilitating the necessary work to bring the partnership to

fruition. A major goal with the Barone-Vader partnership was to develop a model for use in developing strategic partnerships with other key community colleges. A review process was deemed necessary; before new partnerships were added, existing ones would be examined for viability. Timelines were established, accountability measures were identified, and celebrations were held. Let's take a closer look.

The driving force behind the entire collaborative undertaking was undeniably the organizational consultant. Highly respected by key Barone administrators and retained solely for the purpose of developing the partnership, he has been able to focus exclusively on the project. Described as "always on the door step, but the kind you don't mind having on the door step," he set about establishing an organizational link between Barone and Vader. As mentioned above, the two presidents had previously agreed in concept; thus the necessary bridge from Barone to Vader was already in place. They continued to provide the necessary resources, primarily by empowering appropriate organizational members. A working group of key people from both campuses, including high- and mid-level administrators and faculty, began to meet frequently under the direction and encouragement of the consultant. Striving toward a common goal enabled them to forge sound interpersonal relations. Turnover was kept to a minimum, ensuring continuity of personnel. In fact, nearly all of the same people are still involved today.

Another key aspect of this stage of innovation was procedural autonomy combined with multiple milestones. Although the presidents sanctioned the undertaking, they stepped back to allow those with joint roles and responsibilities to work in creative isolation. A definite timeline had been established for activities such as planning meetings, open houses, and "emerging technologies" seminars. A celebration, covered

extensively by the local media, was held to commemorate the signing of the partnership. Additionally, the president of Barone hosted a reception at his home in November of 2003 to formally recognize all of the strategic partners involved at that time.

Not unexpectedly, many of Kanter's properties inherent in the last phase of innovation, that *of transfer and diffusion*, can be seen in the case study. Here we would want to see signs that the new concept is becoming embedded in ongoing organizational practice as well as indication of minimal change within the organizations, inter-organizational ties, and a receptive environment.

Although in the very early stages, aspects of the partnership are becoming embedded in organizational practice. In interviewing the presidents, it became obvious that it is a frequent topic of conversation during their regular luncheons. In the beginning organizational members' roles and responsibilities were changed to ensure the success of the partnership. As the process evolved, fewer changes were needed. Barone was definitely perceived as reaching out to Vader; most meetings took place on Vader's campus. Thus an important bridging structure was, and still is, in place. The environment has also been receptive as evidenced by the fact that at a recent Barone open house ("Discovery Day") the number of interested transfer students and their parents was far more than had been anticipated. Although extra chairs were brought in, several people still ended up standing throughout the hour-long session!

We have now seen how the environment created the need for a private, four-year engineering university to reconceptualize its perception of transfer students, primarily those at community colleges. This perceived need called for a new relationship between the university and the community college, a relationship characterized by shared goals

and interdependencies. In the process of working together, an innovative organizational arrangement, the strategic partnership, emerged. The findings have been examined in light of existing theoretical frameworks and discussed in ways in which they are consistent with Gray (1989), Kanter (1990), and Wilbur (1996). However, certain aspects of the planning process can be seen to be inconsistent with these theories. None of these frameworks accounts for the presence, indeed the centrality, of a champion.

What Is Not Accounted for by the Theoretical Perspectives

Although Gray's (1989) negotiated order theory, Kanter's (1990) model of innovation, and Wilbur's (1996) study of collaboration between two- and four-year institutions offer explanatory mechanisms by which we may come to understand the planning process of this case study more fully, they do not explain the importance of the champion. In fact, the findings are inconsistent with Kanter's (1990) second task, that of coalition building, in her depiction of the innovation process. She suggests that a study of the history of innovations reveals the importance of a whole coalition, not a single sponsor. Additionally, she references other studies that suggest the importance of transactions and managing them over time, rather than a single sponsor, as essential for the innovation to unfold. Because the findings of this study strongly speak to the centrality of the champion, they can be seen to be inconsistent with some of Kanter's (1990) model of innovation and lacking in the conceptual frameworks offered by either Gray (1989) or Wilbur (1996). In essence, then, this study fills a gap in the literature by extending our understanding of the collaborative process used by two- and four-year institutions who adopt an innovative organizational arrangement designed to enable them

to thrive in the 21st century. Let's more fully consider the role of a champion as evidenced in this case study.

Certainly, the organizational consultant can be identified as a champion who was eminently influential in the development and implementation of the strategic partnership. Strauss's (1978) property that characterizes the negotiator is relevant here. Representing Barone University, he can be seen as an experienced negotiator who knew how to approach the right people to get things accomplished. As an outsider to Barone, but with a multitude of contacts within education as well as business and industry, he was uniquely positioned to advance the partnership. Players at both Barone and Vader spoke very highly of him as an individual and his ability to plan, organize, and move the process along.

To return to Fine (1984) and his discussion of smaller- and larger-scale negotiations, we gain additional insight into how the organizational consultant, i.e., the champion, was able to accomplish so much. The success of his smaller-scale negotiations, interpersonal in nature, enabled the consultant to begin discussion of the partnership. Building on these relationships, he was then able to extend his area of influence, successfully negotiating not only for himself but also for the organizational unit—i.e., Barone—that he represented. This too helped to move the partnership forward.

As mentioned previously, Gray (1989) asserts that the problem-setting phase is often the most difficult one in her process-oriented approach to negotiation. The organizational consultant has been shown to have played a significant role in the important steps in this first phase, including common definition of the problem,

commitment to collaborate, identification of key stakeholders, and legitimacy of the stakeholders. He had a keen sense for deciding how to get things done and who should be included.

Implications

The initial question that first stimulated my interest in looking at collaborative undertakings was “*How* does collaboration take place?” In seeking a theoretical explanation, I came across negotiated order theory and found the work of Strauss (1978), Fine (1984), and Gray (1989) to be particularly informative; namely, Strauss’s properties influencing the negotiation context, Fine’s conception of smaller- and larger-scale negotiations for understanding interorganizational relationships, and Gray’s process-oriented approach to negotiation. We have seen where the findings are consistent with these theoretical frameworks and also where the findings are inconsistent with the theories; i.e., the presence and centrality of the champion. In building on the work of the negotiated order theorists as well as Kanter (1990) and Wilbur (1996), we can also see the emergence of another significant dimension: overcoming faculty resistance.

Because my study seeks to understand collaboration between two- and four-year collegiate institutions—operationalized as a strategic partnership—as a new organizational arrangement, I became interested in Kanter’s (1990) model of innovation. Particularly informative is her depiction of the four tasks in the innovation process as being facilitated by structural conditions and social arrangements. She suggests that “the common organizational threads behind innovation are breadth of reach, flexibility of action, and above all, integration between those with pieces to contribute, whether inside

or outside a single organization” (1990, p. 313). Let us now see how this depiction may be informative for understanding and overcoming faculty resistance.

Faculty represent the core of an educational institution. In essence, we can see characteristics of Mintzberg’s (1979) professional bureaucracy in that the professionals at the operating core—that is, the faculty—control their own work. Thus power resides in their expertise; they have influence because of their knowledge and skills. Accustomed to autonomy and academic freedom, they are generally internally focused. For these reasons, they often have a local rather than a cosmopolitan view. Such a local orientation does not serve an institution faced with today’s competitive environment very well.

Several of the Vader administrators—in thinking about university-community college relationships—mentioned the difficulties in attempting to collaborate with another four-year university in the same community. Although the administrators from both institutions were able to forge various agreements, these agreements were typically torpedoed by the faculty. It was partly because of those poor experiences that Barone’s advances were so welcomed. Although there were resistant faculty at Barone, it was not apparent to those at Vader.

That resistance was effectively handled internally at Barone. From his perspective as the organizational consultant, Bardy observed:

There was some question initially on the openness of Barone faculty to community college students. But it was very clear from the beginning, there was a real openness and receptivity and willingness to collaborate and participate in this [strategic partnership] on the part of Barone faculty. I think that there may have been some reservation or some fear on the part of the Barone administration—are the faculty going to collaborate? Are they going to be interested in supporting this?

In light of these concerns among administrators, the Barone chemistry professor, Charles Powell, provided an interesting perspective:

The point I am trying to make is that the administration is committed to making this a success. And you should feel blessed because once they have finally decided that that's what they want to do, and they're going to do it, and they're going to make sure that faculty like Chuck is going to come along, whether he wants to or not, it's going to get done.

When asked specifically about working together in the development of the strategic partnership, Powell provided additional insight that appears to reflect the subsiding of faculty resistance: "I honestly believe [the strategic partnership] is going to help my program, and other programs on campus because the students that go to community college will see a variety of options." His ability to look externally is also reflected in this comment: "The other most important factor here is that eventually our institution will develop relationships with faculty from other institutions, mainly the two-year community colleges, that will hopefully flourish and be beneficial to both." Finally, when Barone's president, Dr. Thomas Frank, was asked how the institution had changed as a result of the joint undertaking, he was clear in his assertion:

The whole attitude toward transfer students has changed starting before that agreement so that having the agreement and having other agreements has certainly accelerated the process. I don't think there's any opposition right now at all, from the faculty or anybody to bring in transfer students to Barone. In fact, I think now everyone's encouraging. Didn't used to be that way at all.

We will now turn to Kanter's (1990) model of innovation to more fully understand the implications of this dimension. She suggests although innovation derives from individual talent and creativity, whether the innovation is realized is a function of the organizational and interorganizational context. Integration is key—within the organization, between organizations, and within the environment. With Barone we have

seen how faculty resistance surfaced and how those challenges were met. Let us not forget, either, how top-level administrative support at both institutions was clearly evident. This is consistent with Kanter's assertion that "higher management, one or two levels removed from the innovation, was directly involved in making major decisions about the project and often ran interference for it as well as securing necessary resources" (1990, p. 293).

Again we return to negotiated order theory for help in understanding this new dimension suggested by the findings. Because of the carefully orchestrated relationship building initiated by the organizational consultant and encouraged by the Barone administrators, faculty became apprised of the harsh realities now facing their institution. Provided with information attesting to the fact that transfer students could indeed perform as well as native students, they became less resistant. Given opportunities to showcase their programs and labs, they gradually became more involved. It, of course, helped that the president maintained a consistent message about his desire to increase the number of transfer students "for all the right reasons," according to the chemistry professor. It is of no small significance that this professor, who spoke frequently of his desire "to help young people," was instrumental in breaking down barriers. In fact, he can be viewed as an innovator in his own right.

We are also reminded of Gray's suggestion that we replace the pioneering metaphor stressing independence with one stressing dynamic wholeness. We need to complement our present values and styles of interacting, which emphasize independence, with models that stress interdependence and complementarity. Such new collaborative interorganizational designs, based on the principle of dynamic wholeness, are far better

suited for solving the complex problems now apparent not only in the fiscally constrained context of higher education but also in our turbulent 21st century environment.

Recommendations

Collaboration offers a viable strategy for solving problems in contemporary society. While collaborative undertakings hold much promise, they are time-consuming and labor intensive. To enhance the likelihood of their success, it is essential that we understand the nature of collaboration as a strategic response to our present-day challenges.

Faced with multi-year budget reductions that show no sign of abating and calls for increased efficiency and effectiveness in higher education, collaboration offers a viable strategy for improving educational opportunities for Michigan's students. The case study of a private, four-year university and a public, two-year community college highlights some of the issues, as well as the promise, of working together. Since we reside in an autonomous state, with no coordinating or governing board, there are implications for both policy and educational practice. State policies should provide incentives for two- and four-year institutions to work together more efficiently and more effectively. Policymakers interested in strengthening transfer education should evaluate the potential of collaborative undertakings, such as the strategic partnership, for improving transfer success. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation One: Offer Policy Incentives to Encourage Two- and Four-Year Institutions to Work Together to Create a Supportive Educational Environment to Foster Best Practices in Undergraduate Education

Since we exist in an autonomous state system, it is incumbent upon policymakers to ensure that we have an environment conducive for working together. Policy incentives can encourage four-year institutions to reach out to two-year institutions, especially in light of state employment needs.

Recall how Barone, with its rigorous programs in engineering and management, sought to partner with select community colleges—those thought to have the ability to prepare students for successful transition to Barone. Vader, surprised but of course pleased that Barone was interested in its students, began a concerted effort to ensure that it was providing an adequate first two years of the baccalaureate program. Its offerings in math and physics were reviewed for proper sequencing. Barone, for its part, expanded its efforts to establish course equivalencies. Both institutions made a concerted effort to become more familiar with each other's programs and campuses. In so doing, educational dialogue was stimulated on their respective campuses. It would seem that similar benefits could be realized through increased interinstitutional collaboration between and among two- and four-year institutions.

Recommendation Two: Provide Students with Personalized Advising and Counseling to Help Them Transition from the Two-Year to the Four-Year Institution

As has been noted, the strategic partnership goes far beyond the articulation agreements that had been in place for years. One important difference was the personal transfer plan that was written and maintained for each student. A joint product of both institutions, it was designed to make sure students were

appropriately placed in the community college courses that would ultimately prepare them for successful transition to Barone.

Recall how the newly hired physical sciences instructor at Vader played an integral role in the curricular changes as well as in the advising of students. Desirous of building his program, he restructured and realigned math and physics offerings so that students could more efficiently complete the prerequisite requirements for successful attendance at Barone. Also, he was given released time to advise students in the partnership. He performed this function working collaboratively with the director of college transfer partnerships at Barone. Students were the beneficiaries of such joint advising.

Recommendation Three: Offer Policy Incentives to Encourage Institutional Leaders at Two- and Four-Institutions to Form Strategic Partnerships to Eliminate Duplication and Redundancy of Courses and Programs

Collaboration among institutional leaders of various two- and four-year institutions is needed if we are to reduce resource-depleting redundancy among courses and programs. Through careful examination of the higher education pipeline, viable program offerings can be streamlined to increase efficiency and effectiveness thus saving dwindling higher education dollars.

We are reminded of how Barone's president spoke about off loading some of the lower-level courses to the community college. Doing so would enable more students to take advantage of the many services community colleges already have in place to build levels of preparedness. Additionally, class sizes are typically smaller, enabling students to receive valuable individualized instruction. Thus more students would benefit by acquiring a solid foundation from which to advance to the upper-level courses. The university, with its senior faculty and well-equipped labs, would then be used for furthering the specialized knowledge that students need in their various programs of study. With increased opportunity for working with senior faculty as they approach graduation, they may well be able to secure employment before degree completion. At the very least, they would be well positioned to begin their employment search.

Recommendation Four: Provide Faculty with Ongoing Education and Training to Enable Them to Work Collaboratively with Those at Their Own Institutions and at Others

Perhaps the greatest challenge to collaborative efforts, i.e, the strategic partnership, is overcoming faculty resistance, especially at the four-year institution. As discussed in the review of the literature, Stein and Short (2001) identified negative

faculty attitudes, including criticism, suspicion, and competition, as well as personal barriers resulting from a lack of interpersonal skills and style, as formidable challenges.

Recall Gray's insistence on increasing interdependence and complementarity to creatively seek solutions in our contemporary, turbulent environment. If we accept her premise that that is what is needed to survive in the 21st century, it becomes clear that faculty members will have to work differently. If indeed we are to guarantee the long-term success of our respective institutions, we need to envision ways of working together more effectively not only with those from our own institutions, but also with those at other institutions. Such a paradigm shift will not come without organized efforts to prepare faculty for these changing roles.

Recommendation Five: Formulate Institutional Policies and Educational Practices That Encourage Faculty to Invest More of Their Time and Effort in Working with Colleagues at other Two- and Four-Year Institutions

Encouraging faculty from two- and four-year institutions to work together could do a great deal to strengthen transfer education programs. To encourage this form of collaboration, the development of appropriate faculty reward structures should be made a priority.

It is interesting to note that faculty resistance was more evident at the four-year university than at the two-year community college. This may well be because faculty at the four-year institutions have a more local perspective than do community college faculty. They have authority for their courses and curricula; as purveyors of such they tend to be inwardly focused. Two-year faculty, on the other hand, tend to have a more outward focus. They must be cognizant not only of the needs of business and industry in

their service area but also of curricular implications for their programs in meeting area employment needs.

As Wilbur (1996) notes in her study, one of the most important ingredients in any academic change effort is the increased cosmopolitan perspective of faculty (Lindquist, 1978, as cited in Wilbur, 1996). In addition, once faculty have made these external connections, they tend to be more receptive to new ideas, as well as more knowledgeable about how to implement them (Bergquist, 1992, as cited in Wilbur, 1996). Although Barone faculty were initially resistant, as time went on and the partnership took shape, resistance dissipated.

Suggestions for Future Research

Recalling Gray's (1989) metaphor of dynamic wholeness stressing interdependence, we can see that collaboration indeed offers much promise for addressing the complex challenges facing contemporary society. The continued study of the collaborative process can increase our understanding of the issues and challenges stakeholders encounter in working together to accomplish a common goal. Specifically, the lessons learned through careful assessment of the prenegotiation, i.e., problem-setting; negotiation, i.e., direction-setting; implementation; and renegotiation phases can be applied in other settings. Thus the following suggestions are recommended to further enhance our understanding of the dynamics of collaborative endeavors.

Suggestion One: Identify Outcomes that Indicate Success

At the time of this study, the strategic partnership had been in existence for only two years. It was thus too early to see an increased number of transfer students from Barone to Vader. However, other indicators could be identified and used to suggest success. These might include evidence, gathered via a survey, of increased awareness

among Vader students of the advantages of a Barone education; documenting the number of inquiries about the partnership received in Admissions from potential students and their parents; and documenting the increased attendance of students and their parents at the transfer sessions during the semi-annual open houses (“Discovery Days”).

Suggestion Two: Use the Lessons Learned from Developing and Implementing the Strategic Partnership in Deciding Whether to Renew or Discontinue with Selected Community Colleges

A two-year review was built into the strategic partnership document. Part of the early thinking was that those partnerships that were not working well would not be renewed. Five community colleges, including Vader, were included in the first tier. At the time of this study, some Barone administrators mentioned that a couple were not working well and might not be renewed. (Vader Community College was not one of them.) The lessons learned from those that were deemed successful could now be used in reaching out to other potential partners.

Suggestion Three: Survey Students to Determine Their Perceptions of the Benefits Associated with the Strategic Partnership

Although the voices of administrators and faculty resonate throughout my findings chapter, the student voice is not represented. It would be interesting to document their perceptions of the various aspects of the partnership that are designed to ensure their successful transition from the community college to the university.

Suggestion Four: Continue to Study Other Collaborative Efforts Between Two- and Four-Year Institutions

Although care was taken to enhance the generalizability of the findings, a study of one collaborative endeavor, the strategic partnership, within a specific

setting has its limitations. Studies of other collaborations between community colleges and universities are necessary to replicate or expand upon these findings. Such research could do much to enhance our understanding of the nuances and intricacies of successful collaboration between two- and four-year institutions.

Suggestion Five: Expand Upon the Findings of This Study Since the Data and the Theory Are Not Fully Consistent

Further research on the presence and centrality of a champion in collaborative undertakings is warranted. As discussed in the findings chapter, the organizational consultant was the driving force behind the development and the implementation of the strategic partnership. Because the theoretical frameworks used in this study are silent on the importance of a champion, empirically based insights, not only about collaboration among collegiate institutions in general but also about the role of a champion in particular, is needed.

Suggestion Six: Do a Quantitative Study at a Point at which Sufficient Time Has Passed to Determine if There Has Been an Increase in the Number of Transfer Students

The Barone administrators were clear about the need to show an increase in the number of transfer students. Students at the community college need adequate time to work their way through the carefully sequenced math and physics courses. It must be remembered that community college students have a multitude of demands on their time and energy and often are unable to attend college full time. Given these factors, at an appropriate time, a quantitative study should be done to determine if there has in fact been an increase in the number of transfer students.

Recall that Barone's administrators expressed concern about the time and effort required by the partnership. Remember, in particular, that the director of college transfer partnerships stated:

The idea behind it is great but the amount of time and energy as far as dollars, if you will, that's being invested, heck, we could create full tuition scholarships for a whole bunch of transfer students and increase our enrollment of transfers in a heart beat and not have to spend the time and energy on it.

While such resistance and ambivalence are understandable, it must be remembered that they surfaced during the early stages of the strategic partnership. As Kanter (1990) reminds us, the innovative process is fragile and uncertain. "New experiences are accumulated at a fast pace; the learning curve is steep. The knowledge that resides in the participants in the innovation effort is not yet codified or codifiable for transfer to others" (p. 279). It is thus important that sufficient time be allowed for the partnership to truly take hold. The lessons learned from the development and implementation of this strategic partnership can then be codified in a way that can be informative for other collaborative undertakings.

Simply awarding full tuition scholarships to entice more transfer students to attend Barone does nothing to address the challenges now facing higher education. It exemplifies Gray's pioneering metaphor, i.e., rugged individualism in pursuit of one's wants and desires; as such it represents the traditional model of independence that is no longer suitable for managing in a turbulent world. On the other hand, creating an environment that encourages the interdependence and complementarity of Gray's (1989) metaphor of dynamic wholeness provides the means for collaborative efforts, such as the strategic partnership, to take hold and, ultimately, transfer to others. If we accept the

premise that collaboration holds great promise to not just survive—but to actually thrive—in the 21st century, we must do nothing less.

In summary, we have a remarkable story about a collaborative undertaking between a two-year, state-supported community college and a four-year, private engineering university. It is remarkable in that, by all accounts, it is a success story about the extraordinary efforts of a champion who brought both institutions' presidents, administrators, and faculty together to meet the common goal of helping students. Students have benefited; both institutions as well as the surrounding communities are positioned to reap rewards as well. However, there were those involved in, or aware of, the strategic partnership that we did not hear from; there is, in essence, an untold story. Although I would suggest that the body of knowledge has been advanced by my study, new directions have been suggested. Where do we go from here to more fully understand something as promising as a strategic partnership for addressing the complex problems of our contemporary society?

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Data Sources

Pseudonyms have been used in order to protect individual identification.

I. Interviews:

A. Barone University

1. Thomas Frank, president
2. Bruce Roberts, senior-level administrator responsible for enrollment services
3. Lisa Lyons, enrollment services (assistant to Bruce Roberts)
4. James Morgan, college transfer partnerships
5. Timothy Rich, admissions
6. Charles Powell, chemistry professor

B. Vader Community College

1. Peter Bosco, president
2. Stanley Small, academic administrator
3. Mark Miller, student services administrator
4. Jaclyn Russell, counseling
5. Barbara Mason, academics
6. Adam VanHouten, physical sciences instructor

II. Observations:

- A. Strategic partners meeting
- B. “Emerging Technologies” conference
- C. Annual planning meeting
- D. Barone “Discovery Day”

III. Documents:

- A. Concept paper
- B. Meeting notes
- C. E-mail
- D. Press release
- E. Announcement
- F. Data sharing proposal
- G. “Activities Associated with Partnership”
- H. Annual Plan
- I. Other documents as suggested by participants during the interviews

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to obtain information on the development and implementation of the strategic partnership between Barone and Vader. Specifically, I am interested in why the two institutions sought to partner, how the partnership evolved, and how it is working or not. As someone who has been associated with the undertaking from its initial phase, you are in a unique position to describe the partnership's inception, as well as its present form, and to provide information on the complex dynamics of creating collaborative, or joint, efforts. I am similarly interested in your views on the lessons you have learned in participating in the strategic partnership.

I will combine all of the responses for all of the informants for my case study. If you have any questions about why I am asking something as we go through the interview, please feel free to inquire. By assessing this strategic partnership, I hope to acquire additional insight into how these strategic partnerships are developed and implemented, and what are the impacts of this effort on the institutions involved. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. The Form and Process of Collaboration in the Development and Implementation of the Strategic Partnership

A. The Role of Environmental Factors (Pre-negotiation or Problem-Setting):

Institutions collaborate to address specific needs. I am interested in the thinking that went into the development of the strategic partnership.

1. In entering the strategic partnership, what did you hope to get out of it?
2. What role did concern about transfer students play in the development of the strategic partnership?
3. What role did articulation agreements play in the development of the strategic partnership?
4. What role did state employment needs play in the development of the strategic partnership?
5. Were there other reasons that contributed to the development of the strategic partnership? If yes, please explain.

6. What were the incentives for your institution to participate in this undertaking?
7. What factors fostered or facilitated your ability to work together at this stage?

Do you have anything else to add about the initial stages of working together to develop the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about the next phase of working together.

B. The Process of Collaboration (Negotiation or Direction-Setting):

I am interested in the process through which the decision was made to develop the strategic partnership.

1. Who was involved in the early phases of the partnership at your institution?
2. Describe the involvement of your institution as the development of the strategic partnership got underway.
3. Who was responsible for the decision to move forward with the strategic partnership at your institution?
4. Who was responsible in giving final approval for the partnership at your institution?
5. What factors fostered or facilitated the your ability to work together at this stage?

Do you have anything else to add about deciding to work together in developing the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about the process of moving forward.

C. Outcomes of Collaboration (Implementation):

I am interested in your perceptions of what has happened since the formal decision was made to partner.

1. What changes have you made to the partnership since its inception? What are the reasons for those changes?
2. To what extent has the partnership evolved as you thought it would? How different is it from what you had envisioned?

3. What were some of the outcomes your institution realized from this endeavor?
4. Were there any unanticipated outcomes? If yes, please explain.

Do you have anything to else to add about the process of moving forward with the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about your institution's willingness to continue work together.

II. Factors that Contribute to the Institutions' Willingness to Continue to Invest Time and Energy in the Strategic Partnership (Renegotiation):

- A. How effective do you think this strategic partnership has been in fulfilling its goals?
- B. How has your institution changed as a result of this collaborative undertaking?
- C. In what ways, if any, do collaborative efforts contribute to institutional effectiveness and success?
- D. To what extent, if any, does collaboration result in increased risk-taking and creativity, as well as increased satisfaction?
- E. From an institutional perspective, what do you think the next steps should be for this strategic partnership?
- F. What have you learned from the implementation of this partnership that may be of value to future institutional planners?

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Lines of Inquiry

Research Questions	Sources of Data		
	Interviews	Direct Observation	Document Analysis
1. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in the initial stages/phases of working together?	Interview Protocol I. A. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7		Concept paper, Meeting notes, E-mail
2. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in deciding what to do in working together?	Interview Protocol I. B. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,		Meeting notes, E-mail
3. How do stakeholders perceive the issues and challenges inherent in implementing what they decide to do in working together?	Interview Protocol I.C. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4	Strategic partners meeting Annual planning meeting Barone "Emerging Technologies" seminar	Meeting notes E-mail Announcements, Press release, Newspaper articles, Other communique
4. What contributes to stakeholders' willingness to continue to work together?	Interview Protocol II. A, B, C, D, E, F	Strategic partners meeting Annual planning meeting Barone "Emerging Technologies" seminar Barone "Discovery Day"	E-mail Other communique

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Individual Interviews

“Seamless Transition in the 21st Century: Partnering to Survive and Thrive”

The purpose of this study is to obtain information on the development and implementation of the strategic partnership between Kettering University and Mott Community College. Specifically, I am interested in why the two institutions sought to partner, how the partnership evolved, and how it is working or not.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have agreed to be interviewed for 60 to 90 minutes. This form outlines your rights as an interview participant. **Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.**

Participation includes the following:

- You will be voluntarily participating in a doctoral dissertation research project that will describe the collaborative process utilized by a private, four-year university and a public, two-year community college.
- You can withdraw participation from this interview at any time. You can also refuse to answer a question. If you withdraw your participation during the interview, the audiotape will be immediately destroyed.
- You can ask questions of the interviewer at any time during the interview process.
- Your identity will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in all written papers, both published and unpublished, in order to protect individual identification.
- This interview will be audiotaped and transcribed. After the transcription is complete, all tapes will be destroyed. The researcher will retain the transcript of the audiotape and will delete any reference which may identify you as an individual. If you would prefer not to be audiotaped, the interviewer will take extensive notes during the interview.
- You consent to the publication of parts of the transcript and accept that any information will be anonymous in order to prevent any identification.

- If you have any questions about this study, please contact the investigator, Dr. John Dirkx, College of Education, 419 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034, 517.353.8927, dirkx@msu.edu. You may also contact the researcher, Gail Hoffman-Johnson, 2327 Bay Woods Court, Bay City, MI 48706, 989.686.5965, gjohns2@delta.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact— anonymously, if you wish—Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone at 517.355.2180, fax at 517.432.4503, email at ucrihs@msu.edu, or by regular mail at 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

_____ You agree to have the interview audiotaped.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Interviewer

Date

**UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR
THIS project EXPIRES:**

OCT 11 2005

**SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE**

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol Used with the Organizational Consultant

The purpose of this study is to obtain information on the development and implementation of the strategic partnership between Barone **University** and Vader **Community College**. Specifically, I am interested in why the two institutions sought to partner, how the partnership evolved, and how it is working or not. As someone who has been **intimately** associated with the undertaking from its **inception**, you are in a unique position to **verify my preliminary findings as well as elaborate on some of the things I am looking at**. I am similarly interested in your views on the lessons **to be learned when institutions attempt to work together**.

I will combine all of the responses for all of the informants for my case study. If you have any questions about why I am asking something as we go through the interview, please feel free to inquire. By assessing this strategic partnership, I hope to acquire additional insight into how these strategic partnerships are developed and implemented, and what are the impacts of this effort on the institutions involved. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. The Form and Process of Collaboration in the Development and Implementation of the Strategic Partnership

A. The Role of Environmental Factors (Pre-negotiation or Problem-Setting):

Institutions collaborate to address specific needs. I am interested in the thinking that went into the development of the strategic partnership.

- 1. How did you initially become involved?**
2. What role did concern about transfer students play in the development of the strategic partnership?
3. What role did articulation agreements play in the development of the strategic partnership?
4. What role did state employment needs play in the development of the strategic partnership?
5. Were there other reasons that contributed to the development of the strategic partnership? If yes, please explain.
6. What were **your** incentives for participating in this undertaking?

7. **From your perspective, what factors fostered or facilitated the ability of the institutions to work together at this stage?**

Do you have anything else to add about the initial stages of working together to develop the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about the next phase of working together.

B. The Process of Collaboration (Negotiation or Direction-Setting):

I am interested in the process through which the decision was made to develop the strategic partnership.

1. **As the decision was made to partner, what, if anything, stands out for you at this point in time?**
2. **What was your role at this time? Please describe your level of involvement.**
3. **From your perspective, what factors fostered or facilitated the ability of the institutions to work together at this stage?**

Do you have anything else to add about **the institutions'** deciding to work together in developing the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about the process of moving forward.

C. Outcomes of Collaboration (Implementation):

I am interested in your perceptions of what has happened since the formal decision was made to partner.

1. **Are you aware of any changes that have been made to the partnership since its inception? What are the reasons for those changes?**
2. **In your opinion, are changes needed at this point in time? If yes, please elaborate.**
3. **To what extent has the partnership evolved as you thought it would? How different is it from what you had envisioned?**
4. **What are some of the outcomes that have been realized from this endeavor?**
5. **Were there any unanticipated outcomes? If yes, please explain.**

Do you have anything to else to add about the process of moving forward with the strategic partnership? If not, then I would like to ask some questions about **the institutions'** willingness to continue **to** work together.

III. Factors that Contribute to the Institutions' Willingness to Continue to Invest Time and Energy in the Strategic Partnership (Renegotiation):

- A. How effective do you think this strategic partnership has been in fulfilling its goals?
- B. In what ways, if any, do collaborative efforts contribute to institutional effectiveness and success?
- C. To what extent, if any, does collaboration result in increased risk-taking and creativity, as well as increased satisfaction?
- D. From **your** perspective, what do you think the next steps should be for this strategic partnership?
- E. What have you learned from the implementation of this partnership that may be of value to future institutional planners?

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