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Student Government Presidents' Perceptions of their Role in Institutional Decision-Making at a Two-Year Public College

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING AT A TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE by MICHAEL L. SANSEVIRO, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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ABSTRACT

STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
THEIR ROLE IN INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING
AT A TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE
by
Michael L. Sanseviro

This qualitative study investigated the roles students play in institutional decision-making, and in particular how the students perceive both what their roles should be and what their roles actually are. Five Student Government Association (SGA) presidents, serving sequential one-year terms from 1999 to 2004 at one campus of a multi-campus two-year public college located in a large metropolitan area in the southeast, were interviewed. The qualitative research methodology employed thematic analysis to describe the students' perceptions in the context of both the letter and spirit of policy implementation regarding institutional decision-making. Through analysis of interviews, institutional documents, and documents at the statewide system level, this investigation explored a wide array of variables that affect the roles students play in institutional decision-making.

Framed through a critical lens, this study argues that student involvement in institutional decision-making is necessary to engage students as active citizens capable of civil discourse that results in informed action for the benefit of the community in which the citizens are engaged, perpetuating a democratic society. However, this is not what the students perceived from their experiences in institutional decision-making. Based on the

data, this study concludes that students play an advisory role at best, but more frequently are co-opted into serving the desired ends of the administration in a hegemonic fashion. This study offers both suggestions for praxis, and raises questions for further research, in an attempt to reconcile the tensions between the corporatization of higher education and the cultivation of democracy.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING AT A TWO-YEAR PUBLIC COLLEGE

by
Michael L. Sanseviro

A Dissertation

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Degree of
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I am indebted to so many for invaluable contributions to my life, I find it wiser to err on the side of silent inclusion than spoken exclusion. I have received two notably special gifts in my professional career that I wish to acknowledge here. One was the character "Jiminey Cricket," who remains on my desk to remind me that I am fallible and prone to hasty action, thus I need to pause and reflect on what is best in any given situation. The other is a framed poster signed by many students and colleagues as I left a former institution. The quote on the poster reads:

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."
Proverb

"We are sharper for having known you, Michael Sanseviro."

And I, you.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTSA	Parent Teacher Student Association
SGA	Student Government Association
SSC	Statewide Student Council

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Higher education has become a large and complex enterprise in the United States of America. The missions and goals of various institutional types are divergent and sometimes contradictory. Numerous constituencies (faculty, staff, administrators, and students) interact in various ways, but often their voices are not heard equally. Institutions employ different governance structures, and within these structures are decision-making bodies comprised of various constituencies. Decision-making bodies, by administrative design, include or exclude certain constituencies. I begin with the premise that institutional decision-making must include representation from all constituencies, specifically representation from students. Students are frequently not included in institutional decision-making, and when they are included they often play an advisory role, or are simply placated.

In this study I am seeking to investigate the roles students play in institutional decision-making, and in particular how the students perceive both what their roles should be and what their roles actually are. The students' perceptions will be analyzed in the context of both the letter and spirit of policy implementation regarding institutional decision-making.

My interest in institutional decision-making stems from my involvement with Student Government Association (hereafter referred to as SGA) leaders at various

institutions over the past fifteen years. In particular, my extensive involvement with numerous state, regional, and national student associations has shaped my understanding of the impact students seek to have in decision-making. Much of my thinking about the need to ensure student participation in institutional decision-making has been informed by the student leaders with whom I have worked.

Based on my past experiences working with student leaders as well as my experience with institutional decision-making, I believe that while various policies and procedures exist to incorporate student input, administrative efforts may also exist to circumvent policy and procedure that diminish or even silence the students' voices. Likewise, the increasing corporatization of higher education and commodification of students suggests a further tension between the need for efficient management of higher education by administrators and incorporation of all constituencies within a community of learning. In the name of efficiency, the institutional CEO reigns supreme, raising Cahn's (1979) concern that "in a democracy the foolish decision made on one occasion can be undone on another, but when all control has been transferred to the oligarchs, second chances are no longer possible" (p. 4).

Through this study I seek to understand how a group of student leaders, specifically student government presidents, on one campus at one institution, perceive their experiences in institutional decision-making, and describe what the students believe would be a culture of inclusion in which they would serve as meaningful partners in decision-making activities. This study also investigates the various domains in which students perceive specific decision-making roles.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how student government presidents perceive the roles they play in institutional decision-making, what roles the student government presidents perceive they should play, and whether the letter and spirit of policy and procedure correspond to these students' perceptions. Through analysis of interviews, institutional documents, and documents at the statewide system level, this investigation seeks to inform policy and procedure implementation at the institutional level, and possibly at a system level for institutions that are part of a larger governance structure. Likewise, this study seeks students' perceptions on how meaningful student participation in institutional decision-making can be ensured across the institution. Through this study I seek to advocate for increased inclusion of student representation in all decision-making, but more than simply statutory representation, meaning representation in name or document only. I am advocating for the active creation of a culture of inclusion that ensures students are actively engaged in the institutional decision-making process.

I argue that student participation in institution decision-making is necessary because the perpetuation of a democratic society demands educated and engaged citizens capable of civil discourse that results in informed action for the benefit of the community in which the citizens are engaged. I believe the development of critical skills necessary for civic engagement and discourse requires active engagement throughout the lifespan and in every sector of society. The scope of this study focuses specifically on one constituency within one institution of higher education. While this study will not specifically focus on the roles of other constituencies within higher education beyond the

students, I could easily argue for increased participation in institutional decision-making of other constituencies, such as faculty, administrative staff, or support staff, but do not want to diminish the specific focus of this inquiry on the role of students.

Guiding Questions

Six primary questions guide this qualitative study of student government presidents' perceptions at one institution.

1. How do institutional and system-wide policies and procedures define student participation in institutional decision-making?
2. What roles do students perceive they actually play in institutional decision-making?
3. What roles do students perceive they should play in institutional decision-making?
4. To what extent do the students perceive they play different roles in different types of decisions?
5. To what extent do the students perceive they should play different roles in different types of decisions?
6. What activities do the students articulate as necessary in policy, procedure, and/or practice to ensure engaged student participation in institutional decision-making?

Specific details for investigating these questions are included in chapter three, the Methodology and Procedures section of this dissertation, and the questions are framed through the theoretical orientation described below. In addition to the literature reviewed

in framing the theoretical perspectives, a literature review is provided in chapter two offering an historical context of students' roles in institutional decision-making. This history offers a perspective of the roles various constituencies, specifically students, have played in decision-making over time, how those roles have changed, and the context surrounding those changing roles.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is framed through a critical lens, arguing that student involvement in institutional decision-making is necessary to engage students as active citizens and counterbalance hegemonic forces that co-opt student leaders into serving the desired ends of the administration. I draw on various theorists, but primarily focus on John Dewey's notions of democratic citizenship, and a philosophy of governance termed "community of learning" by Robert Paul Wolff. Dewey and Wolff help frame the rationale for student involvement in institutional decision-making, and I draw primarily on Henry Giroux to frame the critical scope in analyzing the data. Undergirding this analysis is a critique of the increased corporatization of higher education, within which a need for efficiency and accountability serve to support administrative control of decision-making, diminishing the meaningful participation of other institutional constituencies.

Giroux describes encroaching corporate power as diminishing democracy and civic discourse. This concern is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but highlights a growing tension between corporatization and democracy that lies at the heart of the governance struggle. The philosophies of Dewey and Wolff need to be considered within the context of this contemporary struggle.

I draw upon Dewey not only for a conception of democracy, but also for a foundation upon which the theories of Wolff, Giroux, and others discussed herein will build. Dewey's ontology is experience, specifically educative experience. Growth, for Dewey, is a result of continuity and interaction, a cumulative connection of educative experiences incorporating and modifying previous experiences into present experiences. Dewey's notion of democracy is intrinsically bound to community, and specifically a community that embraces educative experience. Democracy as a mode of associated living must be developed and constructed within a community. Dewey (1939) identifies what he considers a natural struggle of democracy: "Because it is not easy the democratic road is the hard one to take. It is the road which places the greatest burden of responsibility upon the greatest number of human beings" (p. 129). But, he concludes, "self-governing institutions are the means by which human nature can secure its fullest realization in the greatest number of persons" (p. 130). In discussing the challenges of freedom and culture within a democracy, Dewey identified "cooperation . . . is as much a part of the democratic ideal as is personal initiative" (p. 22). The Deweyan conception of democratic cooperation is what I believe Wolff is seeking in his "community of learning."

The phrase "community of learning" as Wolff (1969) is using it refers to collective understandings and common goals of people having reciprocal obligations to each other, and desiring to preserve the connection to each other in pursuit of common goals. Wolff presents this notion as an ideal and not necessarily an achievable reality of the university. This notion should not be confused with more recent usages of the term "learning communities" in which a cohort of students share a common course schedule,

"communities of learning" as virtual study and discussion groups, or other technocratic uses of similar terms that may be found in educational leadership.

This study focuses specifically on decision-making as a component of institutional governance. John Millett (1978) defines governance "as a formal arrangement for involving various groups or constituencies of the campus in a decision-making structure and process" (p. x). Drawing on Millett's conception of governance, my focus is specifically on formal decision-making structures and processes and the extent to which students are included or excluded in these structures and processes. I choose this formal approach not to diminish the role that culture and informal approaches play in decision-making, but to keep the scope focused on the specific experiences and perceptions of SGA presidents, who serve as a formally recognized constituent within institutional governance structures.

Since this study specifically focuses on student government presidents at a two-year public college, I also draw on Mary Lou Zoglin's (1976) conception of community college governance, which, like Millett's, focuses on structural and procedural elements of institutional decision-making, but specifically identifies the decision-making process as one component of a larger governance matrix. Zoglin argues that the community college has more external constituencies placing demands upon it, resulting in increased governance complexity. Zoglin's conception is particularly relevant to this study since I am focusing on a two-year public college, and like Zoglin, I am advocating for student involvement. Also focusing on the community college, Lucey (2002) argues for a shared governance approach based on civic engagement, drawing on the philosophy of John Dewey.

Falvey (1952), McGrath (1970), and Moore (1995) present various arguments in support of student involvement in institutional decision-making, ranging from the "no taxation without representation" argument to preparation for future vocational activities. In contrast, Wolff (1969) argues, "the true principle of university authority…is that authority resides in the community taken collectively, and that the demand of students for a share of decision-making authority is justified *because they are members of the community*, not because they are affected by the decisions" (p. 126). Wolff is committed to student entitlement in decision-making because student membership in the community of learning stands above all else as an educational ideal. To search for justification diminishes Wolff's ideal, and he is highly critical of any rationale beyond membership in the community of learning.

Wolff is particularly critical of the participatory democracy argument that is advanced by Falvey and McGrath. Participatory democracy is defined here as giving all who are potentially affected by a decision a voice, presumably an equal vote, in the making of that decision. Arguing from the perspective of participatory democracy, students play a role in institutional decision-making because they are affected by those decisions. Upon reviewing Wolff and his criticism of participatory democracy, I realized that a principle of participatory democracy would, carried to its logical end, require the inclusion of a significantly wider spectrum of constituencies than is practical, or even warranted. Thus, when applied to higher education governance, participatory democracy would result in a shift of power from the members of the educational community to those who lobbied a compelling interest in the governance of the institution. Likewise,

participatory democracy includes an implied focus on the rights of the individual, but not any focus on the community.

In his argument, Wolff (1969) states that participatory democracy "substitutes noise and organization for any sort of reasoned principle of apportionment of authority" (p. 125) and he concludes that, "the principle of participatory democracy is an expression of alienation, not a demand for community" (p. 126). Participatory democracy in practice could actually increase the control of external forces upon the institution, and result in a constant shifting of participants depending on the perceived effect various decisions have on those participants. Parents and tax-payers could argue that they are the participants most affected in many decisions because they bear the financial burden, even though they are not typically members of the community of learning.

It is important to note the distinctions between a "community of learning" as conceptualized here and other types of communities. In an ideal form, "the university is a community devoted to the preservation and advancement of knowledge, to the pursuit of truth, and to the development and enjoyment of man's intellectual powers. Furthermore, it is devoted to the pursuit of these goals collectively, not merely individually" (Wolff, 1969, p. 128). The fundamental concern over truth-seeking lies at the heart of the community of learning. Immanuel Kant (1992) addressed this matter in 1798 in *The Conflict of the Faculties*. He identified truth as "the essential and first condition of learning in general" (p. 45). Of critical importance in a community of learning is the commitment to collective goals beyond the needs and desires of the individuals who comprise the community. Through engaged dialogue, members of the community of learning negotiate these collective goals together, seeking more than just

their personal desires. This notion is in direct contrast to the individualistic consumer-oriented perspective of a corporate model of education.

While I am rejecting the notion of participatory democracy as a foundational argument for the inclusion of students in institutional decision-making for the purposes of this theoretical framework, what does remain highly relevant to this theoretical framework are the Deweyan notions of cooperative communities and active engagement of students in educative opportunities (Dewey, 1938). What I am calling a cooperative community is what Dewey addresses as social control: "It is not the will or desire of any one person which establishes order but the moving spirit of the whole group. The control is social, but individuals are parts of a community, not outside of it" (1938, p. 54). Useful to this discussion is the distinction Dewey makes between individualism and individuality. At the risk of oversimplification, individualism pertains to a focus solely on the self, where individuality incorporates a notion of the self in voluntary associations with others.

Unlike corporate models that place capitalistic gain as paramount, specifically financial gain for the individual capitalists regardless of the potentially negative effects on other aspects of the community, Dewey asserts that individuals cannot exist in a vacuum and the well-being of the cooperative community must be maintained in order for the individuals to experience growth. Dewey moves beyond isolated interactions and instead considers the totality of individual experiences, occurring naturally within a social context, as framing each subsequent experience that, when guided accordingly, will lead to an educative experience resulting in individual growth. This active approach, when

applied to institutional decision-making, demands that students be fully engaged in the process.

Giroux (2002) states, “the new corporate university values profit, control, and efficiency” (p. 434). While corporate notions focus on the product or outcomes, specifically efficiency and accountability, Dewey rejects the separation of product and process. For Dewey, the educative experiences of the decision-making process are linked to the product. Dissecting institutional decision-making into advisory and approval components not only diminishes the voices of those excluded from the approval components, but also separates the process from the product. This separation negates the community of learning that is theoretically being sustained. While it might be argued that, even in an advisory capacity, the students are being prepared for future engagement in citizenship activities, Dewey would reject this argument both because of the passivity of the activity (spectator theory of knowledge) and the notion of preparation for future living. Dewey flatly rejects preparation for future living, demanding that life is lived in the present.

Paulo Freire’s (2000) critique of education distinguished between a passive and oppressive approach that perpetuates the existing system and its corresponding inequalities (which he refers to as the “banking” concept of education) and a pedagogy of freedom that engages active dialogue. Freire’s active dialogue is a critical pedagogy, one that is fluid and emerging through the participants, and I believe is consonant with the spirit of what both Wolff and Dewey are advocating. The relevance of this critical pedagogy applies not only within the classroom, but across all aspects of higher education. Ira Shor (1996) puts Dewey’s theory into practice by actively engaging his

students in the construction of every aspect of their educational process, including negotiating core elements of the syllabus like grading and attendance policies. Shor (1996) states, "I am trying to be a critical-democratic teacher in a setting where critical inquiry and power-sharing have virtually no profile in student experience" (p. 19). Shor describes the "democratic vacuum" he encountered and the struggle to engage students in a process of shared power. Moving beyond the classroom to consider multiple spheres within the institution, Donald Kennedy (1997) speaks of actively engaging students in decision-making and of the responsibility of the academic enterprise to students.

The contemporary perspectives and experiences of Kennedy and Shor are relevant because creating a culture of inclusion, one that engages students, faculty, staff, and administrators in meaningful dialogue linked directly to a fluid process of decision-making and re-evaluation, must permeate an entire institution, if not the entire field of higher education. Annette Kolodny (1998) speaks clearly about shared governance, and while she does not identify the theory of "community of learning" by name, she frames her arguments for the aim of education on Lawrence Cremin's notions of John Dewey's "good society." In doing so, she speaks to the same rationale as Wolff, stating, "the inclusive team is thus the seedbed for generating an integrated institutional vision and a campus-wide sense of institutional participation" (Kolodny, 1998, p. 199). What I believe Kolodny is calling for is more than just a "sense" of participation, but a realized participation that moves beyond simply a role of advocacy to one of shared authority. Kolodny raises an important issue that is critical to the successful creation of Wolff's "community of learning." She states:

> The great divide between the academic side of the house and what is euphemistically labeled "support" or "student services" must be bridged. What I

> am calling for is not simply closer cooperation, coordination, and information-sharing between faculty, academic advisors, and student services personnel but a true partnership that links everyone in a single coherent effort. (p. 203)

The civic discourse that is critical for successful shared governance is stifled by the self-imposed silos we create within higher education. While this study focuses on the role of students, other constituencies play an equally critical role in shared governance.

Applying Wolff's "community of learning" to Kolodny's call for an integrated partnership of all institutional actors would be necessary to ensure students a meaningful voice in institutional decision-making. Kolodny does also raise a valid concern about faculty ignorance about institutional governance, and various other issues concerning the institution as a whole. She states, "What I realized . . . was how abysmally ignorant most faculty – including myself - really are about the workplace in which they function. The price we pay for such ignorance is the faculty's inability to respond effectively during periods of crisis" (p. 14). She continues, "Such ignorance makes a sham out of the concept of shared governance . . . even more dangerous, such ignorance also leaves faculty views vulnerable to dismissal by governing boards and state legislators. In their eyes, faculty appear both uninformed and naïve" (p. 14).

This same concern is often raised of students as well, including not just ignorance but apathy. I argue that ignorance and apathy result from alienation. If students and faculty are not actively engaged in the process and product of decision-making, creating the educative experiences necessary to combat ignorance and apathy, they can never be true members in a community of learning. Kolody agrees, stating, "Nothing will more profoundly alienate staff, faculty, and students from administration than the perception that their time and energies have been wasted" (p. 197).

Wolff (1969) describes three necessary goals for institutional governance:

> First, we must seek to block those particular decisions which corrupt and demean the university . . . Second, we must seek to bring the process of decision (making) into the open so that it can be subjected to criticism, to review, and ultimately to control by the university community . . . Finally, we must strive whenever possible to adopt decisory procedures which encourage the natural growth of a university community. (p. 134)

Wolff's utopian notion is attractive, and while situated in a very different time period, does serve to frame this study. However, I am also a realist and believe it would be irresponsible not to address some challenges related to involving students in institutional decision-making, and the increased complexity of institutional governance today. In conjunction with Wolff, I also employ some theoretical perspectives from Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins* (1996), in which he argues that there no longer exists a common vision, mission, or community in the modern university. Readings argues, "we should recognize that the loss of the University's cultural function opens up a space in which it is possible to think the notion of community otherwise, without recourse to notions of unity, consensus, and communication" (p. 20). Readings rejects that ideal community that Wolff advocates, offering instead a "community of dissensus." Instead of the institutional community being defined through unity and common identity, a community of dissensus is one where there is no necessary common identity, but simply a state of "being-together" (p. 127). While Readings' and Wolff's notions of community seem contradictory, I argue that approaching Wolff's utopian community of learning through the lens of Readings' community of dissensus, modern institutions may be able to create a space for, as Readings puts it, "thinking together" (p.192). The shift from ideal to practical is pragmatic, and possibly problematic, but where I see Wolff and Readings intersect is in the commitment to the process of creating a collective space,

independent of individually preconceived notions of what "community" means. This shifts community from a static concept to one that is constantly in flux, being negotiated by those within it.

Readings does raise a critical point that stands to undermine the inclusion of students in a community, be it one of learning or one of dissensus. Readings argues that the commodification of students has resulted in students viewing themselves "as consumers rather than as members of a community" (1996, p. 11). I agree that the commodification of students as a result of the increased corporatization of higher education has positioned students as consumers; however, I am not convinced that a consumer mentality must necessarily negate membership in a community of learning. George Demetrion (2001) employs Dewey's distinction between individualism and individuality in seeking to maintain democratic community within a corporate society. Demetrion acknowledges the conflict between educating for democratic participation while functioning in a corporate society, and states there is no likely resolution in the foreseeable future. Yet, he argues that Giroux, through a Deweyan lens, offers a project that through existing institutions and structures seeks to realize democratic principles. Demetrion does clarify that by "democratic principles" he employs Dewey's pragmatic interpretation of democracy as "conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it" (Dewey, 1927, p. 149). While Demetrion does not resolve the problem, thinking of democracy in this way provides some challenge to consumer-oriented students to move beyond individualism and embrace individuality to create a space for community. Giroux (2006) offers a distinction between "market time" and "public time" that does not unrealistically negate

one for the other, but suggests "articulating a new vocabulary . . . for envisioning civic engagement and political transformation" (p. 250). Even if students are engaged in individualism within their "market time," I think Demetrion and Giroux suggest a space for individuality within their "public time."

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) in *Academic Capitalism* also describe the commodification of students and argue that student power will rise in public universities as a result of resource reallocation and increased student-based revenues. Following the logic of participatory democracy coupled with a consumer mentality, Slaughter and Leslie argue that student power, in the consumer sense, will increase as students demand increased service in exchange for their competitive tuition dollars, and greater control over how those dollars are spent. But in more recent work, Slaughter and Rhoades raise a compounding concern that may further enslave students within the corporate university. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) state, "the theory of academic capitalism moves beyond thinking of the student as consumer to considering the institution as marketer" (p. 1). Furthermore, "once students have enrolled, their status shifts from consumers to captive markets . . . student identities are flexible, defined and redefined by institutional market behaviors" (p. 2). Slaughter and Rhoades continue:

> College and universities are initiating marketlike and market practices, and forming partnerships with business to exploit the commercial potential of students. As institutions adopt more of an economic, proprietary orientation to students, the consumption versus the educational dimensions of a college education become increasingly emphasized. (p. 279)

I acknowledge that the commodification of students creates perceived pockets of power, particularly in the forms of individual and group protest, often concerning levels of service afforded them as customers, but for the purposes of this study, which focuses

on the formal roles played by students in institutional decision-making, I argue that commodification of students will result in diminished voice for students as part of the community of learning. This form of student power may support individualism but diminishes the individuality that is necessary to sustain a democratic community. Likewise, I believe Slaughter and Rhoades raise an important point about the exploitation of the student for commercial gain by institutions behaving as marketers; therefore, any perceived student consumer power is eliminated as the student becomes the object of consumption.

Arguing from a Marxian perspective, power does not truly lie with the customer or consumer, but the commodification of the student results in alienation. The more corporatized higher education becomes, the more the student is commodified, resulting in a perpetuation of the hegemony that oppresses the student in Freire's banking notion of education. Stanley Aronowitz (2000) speaks specifically to this point, stating that students "become cogs in the corporate capitalist machine" (p. 3) and "without a voice in the life of the university or the college, students become akin to alienated labor" (p. 165). Horowitz (1987), commenting on campus life from the 1920s to the 1950s, describes a similar condition: "administrative rhetoric about student participation in governance aside, students remained a subject people . . . in this way they had much in common with workers, slaves, and prisoners" (p. 118). Giroux (2002), in defining corporate culture, describes "governing organizational life through senior managerial control . . . to fashion compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens" (p. 429). The student as consumer equates education with a product, typically one that is a means to some other end (such as future employment), and in this process comes to define or construct what it

means to be a student in terms of the commodity. Marx refers to this alienation from the product as fetishism, which when coupled with alienation from the process of education, results in a diminished public space for engagement in a community of learning (Tucker, 1978). I am not framing this study through a Marxian lens, but this brief discussion is important in helping frame the critical theory that will be employed when analyzing the data, and in illuminating the tensions of corporatization and democracy.

Aronowitz (2000) identifies the establishment of a "permanent administrative bureaucracy" as the catalyst to the separation of the faculty and students from institutional decision-making and to the corporatization of the university (p. 164). The centralization of decision-making with the administration has resulted in token participation in an advisory capacity by faculty and students. Aronowitz argues for the elimination of administration and the dominance of faculty and students as necessary to advance democracy (p. 167). Giroux (in Giroux & Myrsiades, 2001) advanced Aronowitz's argument and concern over the corporatization of higher education and reduction of shared governance to a purely advisory role. Giroux "refuses to reduce higher education to its entrepreneurial function" and advances the main purpose of higher education as "civic education, taking seriously what it means to educate students for critical citizenship and political agency" (p. 2). Giroux (2002) states, "fundamental to the rise of a vibrant democratic culture is the recognition that education must be treated as a public good – as a crucial site where students gain a public voice and come to grips with their own power as individual and social agents" (p. 432). Simply including students at the decision-making table does not ensure that a public space is created in the spirit of democracy; students must have a voice that is heard and that carries shared authority in

the decision-making process. Giroux warns that including a variety of institutional constituencies who remain engaged in corporate culture still results in passivity. He links market-driven approaches in higher education with individualism (as opposed to Dewey's individuality), and the disintegration of civic discourse.

While I would not argue for the elimination of administration and shifting control wholly to faculty and students since administrative personnel do offer a level of continuity and dedicated attention that students and faculty may not, I agree that a significant increase in student and faculty participation in decision-making is critical, and the roles, size, and functions of administration demand careful review and revision. While there has been discussion of shared governance models and arguments for or against corporatized approaches by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) (Hamilton, 1999), neither professional association has addressed the role of students in institutional decision-making. Likewise, while corporatization purports to increase efficiency, there is a lack of evidence that corporatization is effective in a higher education setting (Bennett, 2002; Bok, 2003). John Millett (1962), in a very telling statement both for his era and now, writes:

> I believe ideas drawn from business and public administration have only a very limited applicability to colleges and universities. More than this, the essential ideas about business and public administration, such as they are, may actually promote a widespread and unfortunate misunderstanding of the nature of the college and university in our society. (p. 4)

In arguing for a shift from a consumer-focused perspective to one of citizenship in a community of learning, I draw upon Giroux's description of encroaching corporate power as diminishing democracy and civic discourse. Giroux's critical analysis, coupled

with Wolff's ideological "community of learning," and Dewey's democratic engagement, serve to frame my argument for the increased participation of students in institutional decision-making, and provide the primary conceptual framework for this study.

An underlying assumption of this study is that student participation in institutional decision-making is beneficial both to the students and the institution. In addition to the theoretical rationale previously discussed, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) provide practical benefits for both the students and the institution, such as increased connectedness with the institution, resulting in increased student satisfaction, academic success, retention, a sense of community, and institutional good-will beyond graduation (though arguably it is difficult to determine who benefits more, the institution or the student). Kinzie and Kuh (2004) also provide research examining student agency and the benefits of sharing responsibility for campus governance with students, linking increased student agency with increased "student satisfaction and the likelihood that they will persist to graduation" (p.6).

As part of the "community of learning," I will also assume that a goal of higher education is the preparation of students for active participation in a democratic society (Dewey, 1916). While Dewey would reject the notion of preparation for future living per se, my intent in drawing on Dewey is in support of creating an active experiential engagement in a democratic process for continued growth and active participation in the democratic society in which one lives. My critique of student participation in institutional decision-making will inevitably become a critique of how institutions advance this goal.

CHAPTER 2

AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF STUDENTS' ROLES IN INSITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKING

The literature focusing specifically on student participation in institutional decision-making is slim. The literature seeking to capture students' perceptions about their roles in institutional governance is practically non-existent. Given the lack of research that specifically addresses this study, I draw on research from various sources that either advocate for, or argue against, the inclusion of students in institutional decision-making. I provide these perspectives in an historical context, but this review is not intended to be a full account of the history of student participation in institutional decision-making. I have also chosen to exclude certain bodies of literature that do not have a specific bearing on this study, such as literature on elementary and secondary educational governance, or literature focusing only on the roles of non-student constituencies in higher education governance.

Student power is a broad and intricate sphere, within which great struggle has occurred (Boren, 2001). While student activism and the creation of student unions and societies have been a significant historical aspect of what has developed into modern student government, and will receive some attention in this literature review, it is not a focus of this study. To frame some of the history of student involvement in institutional decision-making, the brief review included within this literature review will reference

some international influences, but the primary considerations and critiques of this study will focus on higher education within the United States of America.

A Return To "Camelot"

Similar to the sentiments surrounding the presidency of John F. Kennedy in the 1960s, the notion of significant student (and for that matter faculty) participation in institutional decision-making is reminiscent of a golden age when students and faculty lived in peaceful harmony in communities of scholars. McGrath (1970) describes active student-driven guilds in the medieval universities that over time developed into more structured institutions of higher education. Contrary to the idyllic conceptions of a perfect union between faculty and students prior to the creation of administration, higher education has been riddled with conflict, regardless of who constituted the power base (Boren, 2001; Falvey, 1952).

The students in the early medieval universities controlled all aspects of the institutions. The students "owned" the university, hired faculty, and negotiated with local municipalities when necessary. Faculty members were viewed more as private tutors, similar in philosophy to ancient Greek or Roman approaches to pedagogy. The early universities had no physical plant to speak of; therefore, wherever the students were located there was the university. Falvey (1952) describes how "at Bologna, the students were the corporation or *universitas*…faculty members could neither vote nor hold office. Students selected the masters, determined the fees, length of terms, and time of beginning" (p. 35). Falvey calls the University of Bologna "the 'parent' of the universities of democratic type" (p. 34). In contrast to Bologna, Falvey refers to the

University of Paris, chartered shortly after Bologna, as "the 'parent' of universities of the centralized type" (p. 34). While the "nations" of students existed in the "centralized" institutions of northern Europe, and were similar to those of southern Europe, the powers of the students were more restrictive. "As the universities acquired books and property, the masters tended to remain with them and in time began to determine policies and to assume control" (p. 36). McGrath (1970) also describes the shifting locus of control from the students to the faculty, particularly the academic societies. As discipline specialization increased, coupled with institutional growth, bureaucratic structures developed.

The early colleges in the American colonies were modeled after institutions in England, and as such were chartered primarily for religious purposes. Any notions of student power from the medieval universities were extinguished prior to chartering the American colleges. McGrath (1970) notes that American education primarily followed the English model, but a shift from faculty governance to administrative governance was borrowed from the Scottish system and Reformation universities (p. 16). This shift gave control to lay community leaders, often representing the religious institution supporting the college. There were significant consequences as institutional decision-making moved from within the academy to outside the "community of learning." This historical note is important in giving context to a concern raised by Veblen (1993) in 1918 about the growing control of governing boards in higher education. These boards are typically comprised of successful capitalists and politicians who believe institutions of higher education should be run as corporations, a trend that continues today (Bennett, 2002).

Despite the lack of student participation in most early American colleges, McKown (1944) cites William and Mary as an institutional exception. McKown identifies the first sign of student participation at William and Mary beginning in 1779, growing out of political turmoil resulting from America's break from England. A famous alumnus of William and Mary, Thomas Jefferson incorporated his experiences into the democratic ideals of the University of Virginia. Falvey (1952) speaks to the backlash of this freedom at the time:

> Although conservative educators became alarmed at the freedom of student life at the University of Virginia, which was a sharp departure from absolute faculty control over student life, Jefferson believed firmly that experience in self-government afforded students the experience which they would need to live as good citizens of a democracy after they graduated (p. 40).

Klopf (1960) concludes that the distinction between the medieval university and the American college was "that a pressing social and economic need lay at the base of the medieval organization, while in America it arose as the application of a democratic ideal to education" (p. 38-39). Klopf sees student participation in the United States as linked to citizenship and human relations in the context of constructing a democracy. While Klopf suggests a dichotomy between the medieval and American institutions, the rise in consumerism and corporatization of higher education suggests to me a co-existence of economic and democratic principles, not a distinct separation of the two as suggested by Klopf.

A notable and significant event in higher education for early student participation, Falvey argues, was the founding of Oberlin College in 1833. Not only did the institution allow entry to all races and women, and grant the faculty a significant role in institutional administration, but also included a provision in the charter for "student participation and

cooperation in institutional management" (Falvey, 1952, p. 41). Oberlin served as a model for the University of Michigan, established in 1837. The University of Michigan was the first public institution to explicitly require student participation in institutional decision-making. These institutions provided the model for early student government in the United States, and served to inspire numerous other institutions throughout the country in the late 1800's to establish some form of student government.

From "Camelot" To Corporation

McGrath (1970) points to the period in American higher education after the Civil War as the beginning of the shift from a primarily English-based model to a more German-based model, focusing on science, research, and graduate instruction. The philosophical shift from behavioral concerns of students and a patriarchal role to one of intellectual inquiry and a separation of the academic and non-academic lives of students, allowed students greater control over the non-academic aspects of their educational experience. However, the lines were still heavily drawn with administrators handling the business of the institutions, the faculty handling the academic aspects, and the students now being allowed some choice in non-academic matters, understanding that an implicit or explicit administrative veto was always possible. Horowitz (1987) also discusses the creation of public institutions resulting from the Morrill Act of 1862 as contributing to an increased focus on vocationalism. The democratic ideals of early American education were being co-opted by the practical needs of the nation and a shift to a production mentality, growing out of the Industrial Revolution.

A number of factors in the early 20th century contributed significantly to changing roles of students in higher education. Boren (2001) discusses the significant role that developing youth movements of the early 1900s played in giving context to student organizations, effectively normalizing the public view of the groups and counterbalancing a long and difficult history of town-gown struggles. Boren warns, "the establishment of schools and youth organizations – often an explicit means of social control – came with a significant risk, one that would be accurately realized in the decade to come" (p. 74). Student organization shifted from solely a local/institutional focus, to a national focus, particularly concerned with political and military conflicts. Activism abroad, particularly in Europe, was often fueled by university students, according to Boren. As students in the United States became more aware, and indirectly or directly affected by events abroad (such as World War I), activism increased. During the 1920s as student organizations were increasing, colleges were also establishing student governments with officers elected by their peers. The institutions were sanctioning such activity not to provide students a role in institutional governance, but to control their behavior. The purpose of student government "was not to empower college leaders, but to foster communication with them and to co-opt them" (Horowitz, 1987, p. 108).

In the 1920s, Antioch College established an administrative council comprised of students, faculty, the dean, and the president as ex officio, cited by many as the first true model of shared governance. This body made all decisions regarding policy and practice for the institution, including traditionally "sacred cows" such as the budget and promotion and tenure of faculty and administrators. After Antioch, a handful of others followed, primarily small and private institutions. Increased student activity and

formalization of student governments occurred over the decades that followed, but not until much later would many public institutions consider what formal roles students should play. For example, it was not until 1999 when under significant pressure from a state-wide student organization that the Regents of one of the state university systems in the southeast created a policy requiring at least 50% student representation on committees making recommendations about the increase and use of student fees. The difference, however, is that the Antioch council was a decision-making body where the committees created under the Regents policy are recommending bodies to the president, who serves as the ultimate decision-maker. In pursuing the policy change, the students argued from a primarily consumerist perspective that because fee funds belong to the students, they deserved a voice in how those funds were used. The students declared a victory, but their role in direct control of their funds was still not codified into policy. Quite the contrary, the policy specifically designated the committee as only an advisory body. Another critical contrast of the Antioch council and the Regents-mandated committees is the philosophical rationale behind their creations. The Antioch council was formed out of a commitment to democratic values and civic engagement, where the demand by the students for a policy change ensuring their inclusion was driven by the desire for financial control.

Boren (2001) argues that one particularly significant event was the formation of the National Student Federation in 1926, the first organization unifying student leaders across the nation. In the 1930s, other national organizations followed, forming along political or ideological lines (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970). Boren describes in detail the chronology of student movements in reaction to numerous wars, the Great Depression,

and the draft. However, the shift of student concerns to national attention diminished to some degree local attention to institutional concerns. This period was also marked by an infusion of strong institutional presidents who shifted more direct and centralized control to the administration. Boren notes a shift in national student sentiment through the 1940s and 1950s, possibly in reaction to the Cold War and post-World War II nationalism. Horowitz (1987) notes that during this time older students and veterans were becoming increasingly involved in student activity on college campuses. I would speculate that shifting attitudes away from demands for student participation during this era could be a reaction to the growing fear of nuclear war, much the way priorities for safety and security shifted in the United States after 9/11, even at the expense of personal freedoms. Post-9/11 sentiments, much like the Cold War era, systematically connect democracy with capitalism, supporting the assumption that failing to engage a corporate approach equates with anti-Americanism. Giroux (2006) raises a similar concern, specifically discussing claims made after September 11, 2001 of "unpatriotic" academicians who spoke out about increasing corporatization in higher education. Giroux also comments that "the passage of the Patriot Act . . . equates dissent with treason" (p. 200).

As a seminal work in the literature on student involvement in governance, the Lunn Report (1957) considered governance issues from three perspectives: general institutional governance, academic administration, and student personnel administration. Over 400 deans of students completed questionnaires, inquiring about areas in which students should have control. Interestingly, many replies indicated that students should never have final control in any area, but there are some areas appropriate for their participation. The report offered "best practices" and concluded with a supportive tone

for student participation in some aspects of institutional decision-making, specifically the student personnel functions.

Following up on the Lunn report, McGrath (1970) conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of the time, collecting data from deans of students at over 875 institutions. McGrath ultimately argues for an increased role for students, but like Lunn, only in specific aspects of decision-making. McGrath draws on many of the same themes as his contemporaries, and offers a useful summary of the sentiments on student participation. McGrath identifies six supporting rationales for student participation: the student investment in the link between education and human achievement, increased student sophistication, education for democratic living, potential improvements from student input, the diminishing of "in loco parentis," and the potential for improved instruction and evaluating its delivery. In loco parentis refers to the notion that the institution becomes the surrogate parent when the student enters college, and as such is responsible for ensuring the appropriate behavior of the student. The shift to viewing students as adults and not children diminished the expectation that institutions would serve in a parental role. McGrath also identifies five objections to student participation: domination of the academic society by students, student immaturity, student attrition/brief involvement, ignorance of professional values, and interference with students' academic and employment pursuits. McGrath moves beyond descriptive measures, offering specific techniques for achieving student participation and restructuring academic government.

Moore (1995) cites key legislation with the passage of the 26th amendment in 1971, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in 1974, as

reinforcing "the view of students as adults fully responsible for directing their own lives, and as citizens interacting with institutions as customers or clients" (p. 200). While I agree that the student gains autonomy in theory when viewed as an adult, the shift to a consumer mentality and the codification of the corporate role of the institution is explicit in the language employed. This autonomy is circumscribed in consumerism, and may not achieve the democratic engagement that the term "citizens" implies.

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, not only were students beginning to call for a role in institutional decision-making, but faculty members were becoming vocal about the need for change. During this period numerous papers were presented at conferences and articles written about student participation (Boyd, 1969; Cockburn & Blackburn, 1969; Deegan, 1970; Erlich & Erlich, 1970; Halladay, 1968; Henderson, 1968; Hodgkinson, 1971; Joughlin, 1968; Pelczar, 1969; Robinson & Shoenfeld, 1970; Schwartz, 1968; Susman, 1970; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Williams, 1968). These papers and reports vary on details and theoretical perspectives, but all included calls for increased participation in institutional decision-making for students. Some reports incorporated feedback from students, and some chose to serve as the voice for the students. What remains striking to me is that many authors, even if well-intentioned, assumed the right to speak on behalf of students with minimal input, even as they argued for expanded student voice. This study contributes to the literature on the voices of students, and provides a critical analysis that is not currently represented in the literature.

Aronowitz (2000) shares:

> In the 1960s and 1970s, student protest led to a new, incipient partnership of students, faculty, and sometimes administrators in university governance. Since the late 1970s , student participation in the various committees of faculty and institutional decision making has become token at best. These relationships

> should be renewed; without a voice in the life of the university or the college, students become akin to alienated labor. (p. 165)

The literature of the mid-60s to early-70s should also be considered in the context of an important statement created jointly by key national organizations in higher education (American Association of University Professors, 1966). The *Statement on Government of College and Universities* clearly identifies the problem of students not having a significant voice, and offers some support to that end, though I find the language used somewhat contradictory. For example, it states that "ways should be found to permit significant student participation within the limits of attainable effectiveness" (p. 90). The concern over effectiveness hints at corporatization, even though that notion is rejected by the AAUP when applied to faculty (Hamilton, 1999). The next year, the AAUP, working jointly with other national organizations in higher education, issued a statement specifically addressing student rights and freedoms (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1967). While the *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* was more specific about students' roles and rights, the language still suggests limited student capacity: "students should be free, individually and collectively, to express their views" (p. 8). One supportive inclusion, "the student body should have clearly defined means to participate in the formulation and application of institutional policy affecting academic and student affairs" (p. 8), leaves the door open to differing administrative interpretations of exactly which policies apply.

Even as the movement for student inclusion philosophically appeared to gain steam, few institutional changes were occurring, and where changes were included student participation remained low. A brief surge in the literature was seeking to understand this phenomenon, particularly with interest in the rapidly expanding

community colleges (Baldridge, 1982; Bass & Cowgill, 1975; Francis, 1979; Hawes & Trux, 1974; Kellams, 1975; Kelly, 1975; Lord, 1978; Millett, 1978; Nader, 1979; Riley, 1978; Schlesinger & Baldridge, 1982; Turock, 1977; Wittes, Chesler, & Crowfoot, 1975; Wren, 1974; Zoglin, 1976). The terms "community college" and "two-year college" are often used interchangeably. The distinctions between the two terms may be based on the specific missions of the institutions. While relevant literature for community colleges is incorporated, the specific institution in this study is termed a two-year college because its primary mission is to provide the core curriculum in preparation for transfer to a four-year college, not necessarily for entry into the workforce or granting terminal associate degree programs. Community colleges are typically community-controlled, where the two-year college in this study is governed by a statewide Board of Regents, which oversees two-year and four-year regional, state, and research institutions.

Given that this study focuses on a two-year public institution, the conclusions from the literature that student leaders in that setting do not typically have enough interest or time to participate in institutional decision-making concerned me greatly. I was hoping the data would contradict these conclusions, but beyond isolated examples it did not. I still argue, however, that students within two-year institutions are particularly critical to the advancement of democratic process and civic engagement, drawing on Lucey's (2002) statement that community colleges can be called "democracy's colleges" because "they embody the best values of American pragmatism" (p. 27). Klopf (1960) stresses the importance of two-year institutions in student leadership development, specifically for civic and democratic engagement, not only because almost half of all students in higher education attend these institutions, but also to reach a broader segment

of society. Two-year college students will either move on to four-year institutions bringing with them a foundation of civic engagement, or enter the workforce better prepared for civic involvement than had they not attended.

According to Baldrige (1982), participation and interest in student activities declines quickly into the early 1980's. Moore (1995) notes during the 1980's and into the 1990's a "reemergence of interest in institutional governance, focused primarily on faculty and academic issues," but says it is not being followed by student interest (p. 201). What increase there is in student participation during the 1990's is focused on consumerism. Moore notes how changing demographics play a large factor: increased student diversity and a larger presence of non-traditional students. Boren (2001) expresses concern about the significant decrease in student activism, especially in the United States, and apparent unwillingness of students to question authority. With declining involvement in formal and informal mechanisms of governance, student consumerism and commodification increase, and participation in a "community of learning" ceases to exist.

Falvey (1952) shares a quote that seems more salient today than when it was written: "In many instances, student participation in government is a farce and a sham . . . this is because neither the administration nor the faculty nor the student have definite concepts of the ideals or philosophy of student participation in government" (pp. 29-30). This is the same concern Kolodny (1998) raises almost half a century later as she describes how faculty "ignorance makes a sham out of the concept of shared governance" (p. 14). While Falvey and Kolodny are specifically focusing on different constituencies, both identify the "sham" that has become higher education governance, whether the

cause be ignorance of faculty, staff, and students about policies, procedures, and politics, or ignorance of the administration about the ideals and value of full participation of other constituencies. But who is to blame for the ignorance – the ignorant themselves, or those who by default or by design allow the ignorance to exist?

Jencks and Riesman (2002) raise a critical concern: "Student government is regarded as a charade at most colleges, comparable in intention to the native governments established by colonial powers everywhere" (p. 57). While related to the "sham" expressed by Falvey and Kolodny, Jenks and Riesman identify a cooptation that, when viewed through the oppression described by Freire, results in hegemony. The ignorance, therefore, cannot be so easily dismissed as a result of student apathy, but instead speaks to the alienation resulting from the commodification of the student.

The historical perspectives provided by the literature in this chapter, coupled with the theoretical perspectives discussed in the first chapter and expounded herein, support the critical importance of this study as one mechanism for providing voice for a group of student leaders whose experiences and perceptions will hopefully enlighten decision-makers in higher education as to the critical need for inclusion of students in institutional decision-making.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The research methodology I selected for this study is qualitative. I wish to describe and understand the perceptions of a specific student culture; therefore, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. While I believe conceptually that culture is bound by time and place, much the way Heath (1983) describes "the ethnographic present never remains as it is described" (p. 9) or Heraclitus could not step in the same river twice, this study has applicability in providing a transferable context for analyzing the roles students play in institutional decision-making in the broader field of higher education, in a manner similar to what Spradley (1979) describes as "translation competence . . . the ability to translate the meaning of one culture into a form that is appropriate to another culture" (p. 19). Hopefully, this study will influence a critical review of student participation in institutional decision-making minimally within specific institutions, and preferably across the field of higher education.

This study focuses on the roles of students in institutional decision-making. Students may play myriad roles, ranging from formal leadership roles supported by institutional structures to roles of informal influence that are not sanctioned by the institution at all. For the purposes of this study, I specifically focus on one formally recognized student leadership position and the formal roles students in that position play within sanctioned institutional structures.

This study is specifically situated within public higher education in one state within the southeastern United States of America. Within this system I will focus on one particular institution and one specific subculture. Given the vast differences between specific institutional governance models, I have chosen to focus on one two-year multi-campus institution located around a large metropolitan area within the state. I have selected this institution not only because of my professional familiarity with the institution, but because the institution adopted a shared governance model that was espoused by the institution's president at the time of adoption as a unique and progressive approach to fully incorporating all constituencies of the institution into decision-making.

The study consists of individual interviews with five Student Government Association (SGA) presidents who served in that role at one campus of a multi-campus two-year public college between the years of 1999 to 2004 sequentially. All five served as student representatives on multiple policy councils and fee committees at the institution, and all five served in various leadership capacities at the system-wide level. While focusing on SGA presidents is a self-selected limitation of this study, I believe these students have been the most active and knowledgeable where student participation in decision-making is concerned. Other students may very well have meaningful experiences and opportunities for participation in institution decision-making, be they formal or informal, which will not be captured through the lens of the SGA presidents.

An initial concern when beginning this study was that students who may self-select involvement in SGA may be students who already "buy in" to the structural notions of governance and may not be perceived as advocates by their peers, but I learned through the interview data that this was not the case with these five SGA presidents.

Because I am focusing on the formal roles played by students in institutional decision-making, and because institutional and system-wide policy will be of consideration, I believe the limitation to SGA presidents is appropriate for this study.

The institutional shared governance model was introduced by the college president in 1996; therefore, all students served under the same institutional policies and procedures. In 1999, the Regents for the state university system adopted a system-wide policy requiring student representation of at least 50% on all committees making recommendations or decisions about proposed increases and uses of all fees paid by students (such as student activity fees, athletics fees, parking fees, etc.). All five students served as SGA president under the new system-wide policy, but the first was active in the statewide student council that proposed the system-wide policy change to the Regents of the state university system.

The six guiding questions for this study focus on the perceptions of the students being interviewed. These six primary questions are:

1. How do institutional and system-wide policies and procedures define student participation in institutional decision-making?
2. What roles do students perceive they actually play in institutional decision-making?
3. What roles do students perceive they should play in institutional decision-making?
4. To what extent do the students perceive they play different roles in different types of decisions?

5. To what extent do the students perceive they should play different roles in different types of decisions?
6. What activities do the students articulate as necessary in policy, procedure, and/or practice to ensure engaged student participation in institutional decision-making?

In addressing these questions, this study seeks to understand the culture of decision-making from the students' point of view. I seek to create cultural meaning, inspired by the classic Geertzian (1973) notion of "thick description." However, I do not fully employ the totality of the Geertzian approach. Since this qualitative study is primarily descriptive and interpretive, I rely most heavily upon the interview data, but also draw from other data sources. I reviewed various documents and meeting minutes, and held additional conversations with key informants who worked with all five interview participants. I selected the interview method because Silverman (2000) identifies it as the most appropriate qualitative research method for "understanding 'experience'" (p. 90). While my study focuses on the perceptions of the selected student leaders, the interview questions asked the students to describe specific experiences, from which I explored their perceptions. Understanding that the same experiences can be viewed differently, and different experiences can be perceived in similar ways, I focused on the relationship between perceptions and experiences. I designed and ordered questions in such a manner to elicit both detailed descriptions of the participants' own experiences, and descriptions of the same experiences from the viewpoint that the participants felt other people held. This approach helped identify both consistencies and

inconsistencies between experiences and perceptions of those experiences from multiple viewpoints.

The research design was also generally informed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), including the concept of categorization "as a central process of analysis" (p.195). Organizing the data in terms of categories allowed for the simplest coding method, and also allowed a certain level of flexibility in shifting or expanding categories as the study progressed.

Participants

The population for this study, and selection of participants, is based on LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) criterion-based selection. The five students selected for interviewing all possess specific characteristics related to the central concern of this study. I defined the population as student leaders who have had the opportunity to participate in some form of institutional decision-making, and bound this population to specifically limit participation to student government presidents. Based on the results of previous research conducted for a class project in the fall of 2001 involving a brief survey on student participation in institutional decision-making within the same state university system (Sanseviro, December 6, 2001), SGA presidents appear to have the most formal access to decision-making mechanisms and therefore serve as the most appropriate participants for this study (see Appendix A for survey questions and discussion of results).

Upon determining that the SGA president would be the most appropriate interview participant, I contemplated interviewing all of the student government

presidents within the state university system. However, given the significant diversity of institutional types, decision-making structures, and student government roles and structures, I decided to seek depth instead of breadth and focus on one institution and a set of SGA presidents during a specific period of time. I selected a particular two-year institution due to my familiarity with the institution, its espoused commitment to a shared governance model that includes students, and the convenience of its geographic location within the state. Likewise, SGA presidents who serve at two-year institutions can offer a unique perspective because they have the opportunity to continue an undergraduate education beyond their presidency at a different institution and potentially offer a richer comparison of their experiences in multiple institutional settings. I selected a timeframe beginning in 1999 due to the addition of a system-wide policy that year concerning the inclusion of students in institutional decision-making. I believe the state-wide policy addition in 1999 is a key incident, and an event that changed the participants' perceptions about the roles of students in institutional decision-making. To gain a current perspective with some historical context, I selected the SGA presidents who served from 1999 continuing through the last serving SGA president completing a full term just prior to the beginning of this study. The timeframe of 1999-2004 spans the administrations of five sequential SGA presidents.

I served as a student government advisor both at the institutional and state-wide level during the timeframe of this study, and worked directly with all five SGA presidents. During the time of this study, I was no longer serving in any advisory capacity with student government, nor was I connected professionally with the students being interviewed; therefore, I believe my role as researcher was not compromised. My

former relationship to the students did, however, ensure my credibility and ease of negotiating entré.

All five participants have served in some state-wide capacity, and all five participants continued their higher education beyond the two-year institution of focus within this study. While all five were asked to discuss their specific experiences in institutional decision-making at the two-year college that is the focus of this study, consideration was given in data analysis to other experiences that may have shaded their perceptions. I relied substantially on primary source data from the interview participants, but also considered second-hand accounts and anecdotal reflections to provide a thicker and richer sense of the scope of student involvement in institutional decision-making.

Procedures

In addition to the literature, I reviewed historical and policy-related documents for the two-year institution of focus and the state-wide university system, such as meeting minutes, resolutions, policy drafts, and websites. Content analysis (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999) of documents discussed in the Data and Results includes a narrative description of the focus institution, and as relating to the study, other governance entities. Document content analysis (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999) also served to situate the data from the interviews, enhancing the context for the participants' perceptions.

Initial interviews were "in-depth, open-ended" interviews, as described by Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999). This interview technique was selected in order to "explore undefined domains in the formative conceptual model, identify new domains, break down domains into component factors and subfactors, and obtain

orienting information about the context and history of the study and study site" (p. 121). As needed, subsequent semistructured interviews were conducted to confirm or expand domain categories, and identify themes within these categories. Interviews were not time constrained; initial interviews ranged from one to three hours, depending on the amount of information the participants chose to share, and were primarily emergent. Semistructured follow-up interview were conducted with three participants. All participants were interviewed individually, and all interviews were held in the researcher's office to ensure a controlled environment for tape recording, a consistent environment for all participants, and confidentiality.

Interview questions were designed following the guidelines for descriptive, structural, and contrast questions as outlined by Spradley (1979), seeking to understand what Spradley terms "use." Spradley explains that "cultural meaning emerges from understanding how people *use* their ordinary language." He continues, "asking for use is a guiding principle that underlies all ethnographic interviewing" (p. 82). Initial interviews began with "grand tour" questions, specifically to situate the data in the participants' language (see Appendix B). The questions focused on topics relating to the responsibilities of SGA presidents, the types of decisions made by SGA presidents, the roles of other constituencies in decision-making, and the decision-making process. All interviews were tape-recorded. Data from the initial interviews were transcribed and analyzed prior to conducting subsequent interviews.

I relied on Spradley's approach for structuring the domains to capture language, specifically understanding the main terms in the language of the participant to describe, for example, types of decision-making and who held the authority to make those

decisions. I operationalized the category domains, and identified themes within each category in the manner Spradley describes for establishing and analyzing factors and variables, borrowing also from the item analysis research approach described by Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999) for follow-up semistructured interviews. This approach entails naming the patterns that emerge from the interview data, and creating graphic charts or tree diagrams to show the relationships between category domains, and then clarifying within each category domain, factors or themes that comprise the domain. The model ideally calls for four levels of analysis, but depending on the complexity of the domains fewer or greater levels may emerge. Since the category domains emerged very clearly and consistently within this study, only two levels of factor analysis were necessary to establish themes.

It was my initial intent to conduct the interviews in chronological order of the term of service as SGA president, allowing the first participant to serve as a key informant, and allow each subsequent participant to reflect on their knowledge of the events occurring during the previous administrations. However, due to the availability of the participants, this was not possible. After completing, coding, and reviewing the initial interview data from all participants, the responses were aligned and reevaluated based on chronological terms of service to ascertain if event descriptions had any reliance on the experiences and events described by other participants. While there were some similar event descriptions, there were no distinguishing characteristics of the data that would necessarily indicate the term of service of one participant from another. Hence, the inability to conduct the interviews in chronological order of the term of service, as initially desired, did not appear to have any bearing on the data quality or results.

Between initial interviews and the follow-up interviews, I discussed categories with the participants to ensure member check as a form of data validity. I wanted to ensure the consistency of data between participants and my accurate understanding of the meaning intended by the participants. Conversations with key informants in addition to the five participants served as another means of member check and helped triangulate the interview data.

In addition to the interviews conducted with the five SGA presidents, and content analysis of various institutional and statewide documents, I engaged in numerous conversations with one primary key informant who served in a full-time administrative support role at the focus institution and worked closely with all of the participants as well as other campus student leaders. Her role was critical in providing background and circumstantial information about events described by the participants, and triangulation of both the data shared by the participants and information about the participants themselves.

Analysis

As I collected the interview data, I also transcribed it. After fully transcribing all initial interviews from tape recordings, I reviewed the data and coded it using a thematic analysis guided by Ely (1991) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). I reviewed the data multiple times seeking categorizes of similarity and difference between the participants. I organized all the data relevant to the emerging category domains into thematic factors. For purposes of presenting the data, I choose to use the terms category and theme as opposed to domain and factor since I believe those terms provide increased clarity and

accuracy for this study. Domain, to me, suggests a realm of vagueness that is not as neatly specific as category. Likewise, factor suggests to me a limiting narrowness that does not allow the flexibility of theme. These semantic concepts may be a function of my own language usage and bias, but these are the terms I prefer nonetheless.

After I completed analysis of the initial interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews to gain additional data and clarity in categories and themes that were not as fully developed from the initial data, and to verify with participants that my initial representation of their perceptions was accurate. I transcribed and analyzed follow-up interview data as I collected it, and used this subsequent data to expand or confirm initial interview data. After analyzing the follow-up data separately, I organized all data for a final review, then reorganized it by categories and themes independent of the first coding to verify the categories and themes still held valid upon a final analysis.

Timeline

The following Gantt chart (See Table 1), as adapted from Handwerker (2002), describes the time frame for this qualitative study, which began in January 2004. Initial interviews were conducted between July 2004 and June 2005. I specifically waited to begin interviewing until the last of the five participants was no longer serving in the capacity of SGA president to help eliminate the concern of any potential repercussions. I also specifically chose to interview the participants who were no longer attending the institution first, and by the time of initial interview, each participant was no longer attending the institution where they served as SGA president. Follow-up interviews and

discussions, as necessary, continued through the data transcription and analysis process, fully concluding by June 2006.

TABLE 1

Gantt Chart for Qualitative Study

Task	Jan-June 2004	July-Dec 2004	Jan-June 2005	July-Dec 2005	Jan-June 2006	July-Dec 2006
Research Design						
Identify question	X					
Identify population	X					
Identify research site	X					
Acquire IRB approval	X					
Initial Interviews		X	X			
Follow-Up Interviews (as necessary)				X	X	
Locate additional documents	X	X			X	X
Data Management						
Transcribe data			X	X	X	
Analyze data				X	X	
Prepare prospectus	X					
Prepare preliminary dissertation					X	X
Edit dissertation						X
Submit final dissertation						X

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND RESULTS

As my primary source of data, I conducted interviews with the five Student Government Association (SGA) presidents who served sequentially from 1999 to 2004 at one campus of a multi-campus metropolitan two-year college located in the southeastern United States of America. In addition, I reviewed various documents from the institution, the Student Government Association, the state university system, the statewide student council, and held additional conversations with individuals who worked with all five SGA presidents.

The data and results presented here reflect the perceptions of these five SGA presidents concerning their role in institutional decision-making. All five expressed some consistent experiences, from which common themes emerged. The interviews focused on three broad categories: roles of the SGA president, challenges faced by the SGA president, and observations made about the decision-making process from both design and practice perspectives. Within this chapter I will describe the institution and the institutional shared governance model, describe the interview participants (drawing on both what the participants shared with me along with data shared by informants who worked with the SGA and all five participants), and identify common themes that emerged from the data.

Description of Institution and Shared Governance Model

For purposes of this study, the institution will be referred to as Multimetro College. Located around a large metropolitan area and consisting of numerous campuses and centers of varying sizes and demographics, Multimetro is a large, public, two-year college with an approximate total enrollment of 18,000 students. The college is part of a large state university system consisting of both two-year and four-year institutions, ranging from instruction-focused institutions to research-intensive universities. Within the two-year sector enrollment is not open to all applicants, but admission standards are not considered competitive. Within the state there is also a system of technical colleges that are governed by a different state agency than the state university system. This distinction between systems is important because the two-year college of focus in this study is not considered by the state university system a "community college." The primary mission of this institution is to provide the core curriculum in preparation for transfer to a four-year college, not necessarily for direct entry into the workforce or granting terminal associate degrees, though the institution does provide some of those functions as well.

Under a new president, an institutional shared governance model was introduced in 1996. A brief review of two-year and community college governance literature indicates that a shift away from traditional hierarchies under tight presidential control to shared governance models within these types of institutions was becoming more common across the country (Alfred, 1998; Bensimon, 1984; Lau, 1996; Palmer, 1985; Schiavone, 1976). The shared governance model consisted of a governance body that I will refer to as the College Advisory Board, which reported to the president, a number of policy

councils focusing on specific functional areas of the college, and assemblies/senates representing specific constituencies of the college (faculty, administrative staff, support staff, and students). The policy councils and assemblies had varying levels of direct or indirect representation on the College Advisory Board. According to institutional governance documents, all decisions were ultimately made by the president, based upon recommendations made by the College Advisory Board, sometimes with input from policy councils and assemblies. While a shift was made to a shared governance model, the final direct authority of the president remained.

Given the multiple campuses and centers comprising the college, the organizational structure of the institution included both centralized college-wide administrative leadership (president, vice presidents, program directors) and decentralized campus-specific administrative leadership (provost, deans, directors, and department chairs). The campus administrative team reported to the campus provost, who served as the primary campus administrator. The provosts reported directly to the college president, as did the college vice presidents. In addition to the direct reporting lines represented on the organizational chart, through the shared governance model faculty, staff, and students could serve in advisory roles through the councils and assemblies.

The various components of the shared governance model, (College Advisory Board, policy councils and assemblies), are comprised of both permanent and rotating members. The College Advisory Board consisted of the president, vice presidents, provosts, and faculty senate chair as permanent members, and rotated the following representatives: one faculty member from each campus, one support staff member for the

entire college, one professional/administrative staff member for the entire college, and one student for the entire college. Rotating members serve for a two-year term, except the student representative who serves a one-year term (however, not typically a full calendar year, but instead an academic year, from August to April or May, or depending on how long it takes for the student representative to be identified, their first meeting might not be until September or even October). The composition of the College Advisory Board was heavily weighted in administration and faculty constituents, with less representation from staff (both support staff and professional/administrative staff) and students. The one student who did serve on the College Advisory Board was a non-voting member. According to Human Resources at Multimetro College, all non-support staff and non-faculty are considered Professional/Administrative staff, including, for human resource classification purposes, provosts, deans and vice presidents who are not classified as faculty. However, for shared governance classification purposes, a distinction is made between "administration" referring to the president, vice presidents, and provosts, and other "middle" administrators (such as directors and coordinators) who are considered professional/administrative staff.

The various functional area policy councils and classification-based assemblies within the shared governance structure are similarly comprised of permanent and rotating members. Permanent members include administrators who are responsible for oversight of the council or assembly, and administrators who by virtue of their position have a direct relationship with the council or assembly. For example, a council on student affairs would include the vice president for that area and the deans of students. Similar in ratio to the College Advisory Board, the councils were heavily weighted with

administrators and faculty members, but little or no representation from support staff, professional/administrative staff, and students. The councils that did allow student representation typically only allowed one student representative for all campuses, while faculty representatives were included from each campus. Likewise, depending on the purpose and authority of the council, the student representative may or may not have been a voting member. During the period reviewed in this study, Student Government Association leaders on more than one occasion requested that one student representative be added to all councils from each campus, but those requests were denied by the college president. The students were granted some additional seats on selected councils at one point, but these additional seats were removed when the councils "grew too large to function effectively" according to an email sent to the SGA president by one of the college vice presidents. However, administrator and faculty seats were never reduced.

Faculty and staff (both support staff and professional/administrative staff) representatives serving in the various rotating positions on the councils and assemblies were selected by an election of their peers, theoretically allowing every member of a given constituency equal opportunity to participate in institutional governance. However, the elections were conducted out of the provosts' office on each campus, and nominations needed to be first submitted to the provost, who would then forward the names for the ballot. Some provosts allowed the council or assembly to run their own elections, collecting and tallying ballots, but that was not the norm. Most provosts appointed someone to manage all elections for the campus, often a staff member within the provost's office. One campus provost chose not to hold any elections, but instead accepted nominations and selected the candidates herself. The selection of student

representatives also deviated from campus to campus. Most campuses allowed the SGA president to select the representatives, but some campuses did require the selected student representatives to be approved by the campus administration (provost and/or deans). Some campus provosts and/or deans, especially for particularly "high profile" councils, would select the student representatives, denying SGA any input.

In addition to the formal entities comprising the shared governance model, various standing and ad hoc committees existed, both at the college-wide level and at the campus-specific level. Some of these committees existed formally through a council or assembly, but most reported to a specific administrator who was either empowered by the president to make a final decision within a specified scope, or who would present the recommendations of the committee to the president for a final decision. By design, the shared governance model should allow all decisions to flow through some entity of the model, be presented to the College Advisory Board for final review and recommendation, and then final action by the president. Also by design, even if an unintended consequence, the model could be time consuming and cumbersome. Most entities met monthly during the academic terms, and less frequently between terms. All policy recommendations were to be introduced at the lowest level first, then work through the appropriate councils or assemblies to ultimately reach the College Advisory Board and the president. A compounding factor extending the time involved from initiation to action was the requirement that all policy introduced receive a "first reading" and then be tabled for discussion and possible action at the next meeting. This could mean, following the letter of the model, a recommendation made to one assembly in September could receive potential endorsement in October, then be placed on the November agenda for the

appropriate functional area council, receive potential endorsement by that council in December (assuming a meeting is held that month given the end of term), then be placed on the January agenda for the College Advisory Board, receive potential endorsement by that board in February, and then be forwarded to the president for final action. This example assumes that each group is actually meeting each month, the item makes it to the agenda on time, and no other assemblies or councils need to be consulted on the issue. Any slight misstep in the process can further the delay by months.

Despite the intention that the shared governance model be followed to maximize input and ensure a thorough and thoughtful procedure for all institutional decision-making, the standing and ad hoc committees were frequently the sites of decision-making. The committees had the flexibility to meet with greater frequency, and focus on very specific topics. The committee chair, or the administrator to whom the committee reported, could determine the committee composition. Some standing committees, by nature of their function, had prescribed membership. Others were completely ad hoc, consisting of a random collection of individuals who were selected by whatever virtues aligned with the objectives of the committee constructor.

Description of Interview Participants

Each of the five students interviewed served as the student government association (SGA) president on the same campus of Multimetro College. The students served in sequence starting in May 1999 through May 2004. All five served under the same institutional president and the same SGA administrative advisor (Director of Student Life), but during this five-year period there was significant change in

administrative leadership at both the college-wide level and campus-specific level. During this five-year period on this one campus there were three provosts, three deans of student services, two academic deans, and two faculty advisors. Likewise, at the college-wide level during this same period, there were five different administrators serving in some vice presidential capacity for student services (the division was restructured significantly twice during this period). There was also significant turnover of numerous administrative positions on campuses and centers across the college during this time. For example, the position directly responsible for advising SGA, the Director of Student Life, had 16 different people serve in that role, either permanent or interim, across the multiple campuses of the college. The four main campus locations went through nine Deans of Student Services, and eight Deans of Academic Services during this time. While the participants shared some unique experiences with some of the specific administrators with whom they worked during their year of service, many common themes emerged from the data. The unusually high level of employee turnover during this time period may also suggest some administrative or systemic issues that could contribute to the perceptions of the students.

In addition to all five participants having served as SGA president on the same campus, all five served in some capacity at the statewide level through a statewide student council to the state university system. For purposes of this study, the body will be referred to as the Statewide Student Council (SSC). This involvement afforded them the opportunity to interact with administrators at the system level, and with student government leaders and advisors from institutions across the state. At the time of each interview, none of the participants was attending Multimetro College, but all were

attending, or had graduated from, a four-year institution elsewhere. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym for the purposes of this study, and will be described herein, in the order of their term of service.

JOE SMITH

Joe Smith served as SGA president from 1999-2000, is a white male, and non-traditional student. He was in his mid-20's during his time as president, and brought a variety of life experiences with him to the position. Joe had been in the military, had been married and divorced, and was politically active. Joe had been very active in SGA since arriving at Multimetro, and had worked his way up through the organization. Joe also served in various positions in the statewide student council, eventually being elected chair, and was a member of the search committee for a new system chancellor. Joe's leadership style was militaristic, he strictly enforced Robert's Rules of Order, and he was very hierarchical in his approach to SGA. Joe was considered a very strong student leader, but was not particularly popular with his peers or administrators. Most of his positions were appointed, based on the perception of his skills and his having "earned" the position. After Multimetro College, Joe attended on and off a four-year university also located within the same greater metropolitan area, but had not yet graduated. He remarried and found lucrative employment within the metropolitan area.

RALPH BRIGHT

Ralph Bright served as SGA president from 2000-2001, is a white male, traditional age student. Ralph was a personal recruit of Joe's, and was appointed to a

senate vacancy while Joe was president. The two remained very close friends and shared an apartment during Ralph's term. Ralph comes from an academic family, is fluent in Spanish, and while very intelligent, was not a motivated student. Ralph was well-liked, very social, and had an extremely relaxed leadership style. Robert's Rules of Order were seldom used, and Ralph allowed his Vice President, a strong and competent young woman, to run the organization. While very popular, Ralph was considered a figurehead and not a productive leader. Joe got Ralph involved at the statewide level, and appointed him to a committee chair position for the system statewide student council. Ralph represented himself extremely well, but was often perceived as more show than substance. After Multimetro College, Ralph attended and graduated from a four-year public institution in a neighboring state.

BUDDY SMALL

Buddy Small served as SGA president from 2001-2002, is a white male, traditional age student. Buddy was from out-of-state, lived with his grandparents, and prided himself on his conservative Southern country heritage. Unlike most of his SGA colleagues, Buddy had no connection to the SGA or the college, but as a new freshman walked into the SGA office and said he wanted to get involved. Buddy was elected as a freshman senator, but quickly advanced into the treasurer's position, then the presidency. Buddy was very focused on relationship building, and was more concerned with creating a positive image than were his predecessors. While Buddy was congenial and talkative, constantly networking both socially and politically, he also was highly committed to history and structure. Buddy effectively balanced building a socially close student

leadership team with being a respected, strong, and organized leader. Buddy was involved in the state system statewide student council, and was elected vice chair. During his term of leadership at the statewide level, there was much turmoil and the organization was dramatically reorganized. Unlike his predecessors, Buddy did not leave the institution after his presidential term ended, but remained enrolled at Multimetro College for an additional year, and was still active in SGA as a committee chair. After Multimetro College, Buddy transferred to a four-year public institution in his home state, where he is extremely politically active, and hopes to one day run for governor.

JUAN DE MARCO

Juan de Marco served as SGA president from 2002-2003, is a Hispanic male, traditional age student. Juan was born in South America and was not a citizen, but had been in the United States since he was a young boy. Juan, mostly through his father, was very politically active in county and regional politics, specifically political action for the large and growing Hispanic community, both documented and undocumented. Despite his direct connections with the Hispanic community and Latino name, he was highly Americanized and had a very neutral American accent. Juan had strong interest in SGA, but worked full-time and was very reluctant to give up his comfortable salary. Juan needed much coaxing to run for a senate position, and was highly deflated when he lost. Shortly after the election, a committee chair position became available, and Buddy appointed Juan. Juan quickly became highly active in SGA, quitting his full-time job. Juan became an active recruiter for SGA, attempting to create his future cabinet when he launched his bid for president. He was the first student at the college to create a “ticket”

approach to getting a block of students elected together. Juan also became active in the statewide student council, and was able to serve in a key leadership role during the reorganization, making a presentation to the Chancellor and system board about the new structure. After Multimetro College, Juan attended and graduated from a four-year research university located downtown in the same metropolitan area. While attending the four-year university, Juan worked in the state university system central office, and upon graduation joined the staff of a gubernatorial candidate seeking election in the next term. While Juan was highly political, and enjoyed the political spotlight while SGA president, he preferred to be active behind the scenes where he believed the real decisions were made.

DUANE JOHNSON

Duane Johnson served as SGA president from 2003-2004, is an African-American male, traditional age student. Duane is optimistic, and became involved in SGA to make the students' experience more enjoyable. Duane had no desire to be SGA president, and initially refused to run. He ultimately agreed to serve out of a sense of duty since Juan had worked so hard and there was nobody willing to run for the position. Duane was able to quickly connect with student leaders on the other campuses, most of whom were also African-American, though he did receive some taunting for being "too country" compared to his more urban counterparts. Initially, Duane seemed timid, almost fearing the shadow of Juan, but he eventually found his niche by focusing on the development of new intramural recreational programming. After Multimetro College, Duane transferred to the system's flagship research university. He enjoyed the community of the small

collegiate town, but not the colossal feel of the university, and transferred again to a smaller technical college in the same area.

Common Themes

From the data there quickly emerged some common themes that were consistently expressed by all five participants. The interviews focused on three broad categories: roles of the SGA president, challenges faced by the SGA president, and observations made about the decision-making processes from both design and practice perspectives. The interview questions focused initially on the participants' perspectives of the categories, but expanded throughout the interview process to reflect on how others within their organization and institution might have perceived the same categories, challenging the participants to compare and contrast their own perspectives with those of others.

Initial distinctions between the categories were a function of the nature, structure, and order of the interview questions. The participants themselves were allowed to describe what they felt should be categorized as "roles," "challenges," and "observations" with little input or distinction being made by the researcher. However, as the themes began to emerge, I initially was concerned about whether some themes were truly "challenges" versus "observations," or if some themes could potentially fall under both categories. To be true to the participants, I honored their distinctions and language choices, even if I might have intuited some themes differently. During follow-up interviews, I inquired about the perceived distinctions of the participants, and learned that some perceived challenges as more personal, affecting them or their success as SGA president directly. Observations, while still having an effect on their presidency, were

not perceived as personally or directly. Observations were more systemic or process issues producing an indirect, but no less important, effect. While these specific descriptions are mine, I believe they capture the spirit of the distinction being made by the participants themselves.

When describing the roles of the SGA president, five common themes emerged: Advocate, Liaison, Overseer, Trouble-Shooter, and Manager. Within the category of challenges faced by the SGA president, the four primary themes that emerged are Apathy, Continuity, Support, and Prejudgment. The observations about the decision-making process included common themes of Tokenism, Predetermination, and Control (See Table 2).

TABLE 2

Common Themes from Interview Data

CATEGORY	**THEME**
ROLES	
	Advocate
	Liaison
	Overseer
	Trouble-Shooter
	Manager
CHALLENGES	
	Apathy
	Continuity
	Support
	Prejudgment
OBSERVATIONS	
	Tokenism
	Predetermination
	Control

As each theme is described, specific examples from the data will be used to elaborate on the theme. Some themes correspond closely with themes in other categories, and some are more category-specific, but all the themes collectively describe a system of decision-making that is designed to maximize input and participation from all institutional constituents, yet in practice minimizes or manipulates participation, allowing a core group of administrators to guide policy and practice toward their desired ends. The participants consistently describe a system that espouses a democratic and educational process, yet operates in a hierarchical and corporate fashion. From these common themes emerge underlying themes that describe mechanisms of suppression that seek to diminish student participation in the decision-making process.

ROLES

Advocate

Each participant, using slightly different terms, described his most critical role as being an advocate, specifically for students, but at times for other constituents who the students perceived needed support. Joe described his most important roles as "representing the students, giving them a voice in the administration." Ralph similarly described "taking ideas from student government and implementing them with administrators, representing the students in meetings" and most importantly "represent(ing) the student body." Juan described, "you work for pretty much what the students want, you make sure the students' opinion is heard…A good SGA president should be an advocate for his students." Duane stated, "the student body knew that we were there for them, that was our main purpose." Joe concluded, when describing the

most critical responsibility of the SGA president, “but mostly it was, to me, about being the students’ voice to the administration.”

Some participants provided details about how they engaged in the role of advocate, describing the ways they would ascertain the students’ opinions. Joe and Juan both discussed formal student surveys, while Ralph and Duane spoke of informal polls, often conducted at the entrances to the Student Center. Buddy indicated that he was constantly approaching students and starting casual conversations, during which he would inquire about their satisfaction with the campus and college. Even in describing the means through which they would seek information to serve as an advocate to the students, they all expressed frustration with the lack of response or care expressed by many students (discussed further under the category of challenges, within the theme of apathy).

In addition to being an advocate for the students, some described a need for the SGA president to serve as an advocate for other constituents that might not be adequately represented, or for whatever reason cannot fully represent themselves. Juan described it as, “A lot of those people used me, or the SGA president, as their mouthpiece because they couldn’t say what they wanted to say. Even if the faculty were tenured, they would still use me as a mouthpiece because they couldn’t get anything out of the senate.” I sensed a pride, particularly from Joe, Ralph, and Juan, that faculty and/or staff would seek them out to be an advocate, but only Juan fully expressed an understanding that faculty and staff might be “using” the students to push their own agendas.

Liaison

Similar to the role of advocate, the participants saw themselves as a liaison between and among various constituents. The descriptions of the advocacy role were specifically focused on providing a voice; however, they perceived the liaison role as more of a communicator to or mediator between groups, sometimes groups of students, but also among and between faculty, staff, administrators, and sometimes constituents from outside the institution. Part of the liaison role also included internal communication within the SGA. Joe's focus was on the internal organization, and being a liaison between members of his SGA. While all five participants described some liaison functions, there were distinctions in how they viewed the role and which constituencies they focused on within the role of liaison.

Duane described a key role of SGA president as "basically be like a liaison from the students to the appropriate staff or faculty member" and "when faculty and staff were looking for student input they would come to us to seek help in what they needed." Duane continued, "I could be like the middle man, and understand things from the students' perspective but at the same time was mature enough to know how to take it to the college president or provost. I think to me that was the most important, being in the middle and seeing the transactions on both sides."

Since Multimetro College had various campuses and centers with different student, faculty, and staff leaders, the liaison role sets itself apart from advocacy in a different way than it might at an institution with a single campus location. All the participants described inter-campus dynamics, but Buddy stressed "probably the most important thing you could do as SGA president, given the way things were at Multimetro,

is to bring unity to all the campuses…for the students to have any 'real,' I use the term loosely, power, all the SGAs had to be united."

Overseer

Each participant spoke about the need to "oversee" various activities, ranging from fiscal oversight to sub-groups that reported to SGA. Joe identified as his second greatest responsibility "overseeing the clubs, and the committees, student activities." Ralph stated, "specifically spending money where it needs to be spent, and if it wasn't being spent correctly take action to stop it." Juan shared, "You oversee budgets, make sure budgets are passed. You make sure student clubs and extracurricular activities…stay in line with the guidelines, and generally, it is like righting herd [such as a Cowboy would gather cattle] with all these clubs." Duane described an example of his fiscal oversight when the campus provost was trying to make a large purchase with student fee funds, "they came back to us with some estimates and I was like, this is ridiculous, this should not cost $50,000 to do this. We investigated and a job like this should be able to be done ten times cheaper, so that is what we did, we went in and stood up to them and said this is crazy." Each participant had examples to share when he questioned the face value of information and felt the need to conduct independent research. The role of overseer was particularly important since the participants expressed a lack of trust for the administration, which is discussed further under the theme of control in the category of observations.

Trouble-Shooter

The participants also described the administration's lack of trust in the SGA. One means of developing credibility was through trouble-shooting. Trouble-shooting was the term multiple participants used to describe how they identified problems and, when possible, solved them. Juan identified this as a significant role, "You are also kind of the de facto trouble shooter with the upper administration, you know whenever they ask a question you have to explain this is what will happen." Ralph stressed that "I really made very few decisions on my own…it wasn't all about me, or going out on my own" as he described the very collaborative nature of how he solved problems. Duane also included in his description of trouble-shooter "delegating jobs, making sure your student body knew everything that was going on…problems and issues that came to hand that either you or someone on SGA could deal with." Buddy expressed that sitting on committees was a form of trouble-shooting, and described certain committees as "think-tanks." Ralph also included within this role "taking ideas from student government and implementing them." The role of trouble-shooter seemed to have both proactive and reactive components, but primarily focused on problem-identification and being creative in seeking solutions. Ralph summarized, "it was really a whole lot of coming together with other people and coming up with ideas to solve problems and fix problems before they happened."

Manager

Similar to the role of overseer in administrative nature, the role of manager was distinguished by what most participants considered the more mundane and operational

components of managing meetings and the business of the organization. Ralph described his responsibilities in this role as "organizing meetings, coming up with the agenda." Buddy felt being " in charge of meetings is [the] second most important responsibility of SGA president." Joe also identified "running the weekly meetings" as a key role. While most participants described the manager role as purely administrative in nature, Juan saw this role as one of the few areas for independent empowerment of the SGA president. Juan stated, "I had control over the agenda, and people would say, well what's so powerful about making the agenda, but if somebody wants something they need to get on the agenda. Since I was the last person who saw the agenda I could say this is out and this is in." Juan was also very aware of the power that Robert's Rules of Order granted to the president, "I could call meetings. Also (determine) when the budget meetings where held. If we wanted to make someone sweat we would hold off their budget request." While Juan acknowledged how limited he felt the overall powers of the SGA president were, he articulated how he used certain roles that others may have viewed as simply an administrative task as a window of empowerment.

CHALLENGES

Apathy

"I remember apathy being the biggest problem within our college." Ralph was most direct in identifying apathy as the most significant challenge as SGA president. He described various attempts he and his SGA made to "stir up some excitement about student involvement," but often to no avail given the commuter population he was trying to serve. Joe shared, "It was hard with it being a two-year commuter school…to find

other students with the time it takes to get things done." Buddy expressed concern that "due to student apathy most decisions are unilaterally or bilaterally made." He also felt apathy was a larger social issue, "to expect students as a mass to get involved that is really hard, just like voters, the American adults don't get involved, they have other expectations to take care of first, and it's the same with students…to think student apathy will just one day go away is unrealistic."

Most participants focused on the apathy of the general student body, and some alluded to apathy within SGA, but Juan was extremely vocal on this point. "The student leadership development was very weak, and it was a rare group of students who would be politically active…most of them just wanted to put that they were SGA president on their resume and they were gone." But Juan didn't place all the blame on the students, "Even for those who wanted to do something, the committee structure could be so frustrating that they would just end up riding the year out. I saw that also at another school I attended. It is not uncommon for the SGA president to be told, well this is a great resume booster, who cares if you get nothing done." Juan went a step further. Given his involvement with the statewide student council and employment in the system central office, he shared a broader perspective than the other participants, stating, "that is the common thing I heard from all the SGA presidents, don't worry, this is a great resume piece, let the grown ups handle everything."

Continuity

"That lack of continuity, I think, contributed a lot to why the administration wasn't real receptive to dealing with students. They kind of knew that if we stall them a

little bit they will be gone next year, so it definitely put us at a disadvantage." Joe's sentiments identified a multi-layered challenge that was expressed by all participants. He went on to describe how at "a four year school…you can bring in people as freshmen and develop those leaders so by the time they are seniors they are ready to take on those roles, whereas at a two-year school it is more hit or miss. Some years it would be really good and some really bad." Ralph felt it was "like a catch-22. It would take years to get someone involved, but then they would take about a year to catch on…so that's just the way it goes."

Juan felt "the flaw that exists is that the SGA president, well the entire SGA, is transitory in nature. We show up for one year, then the next year you start all over again, especially at a two-year institution. Duane also shared, "I don't personally think you can achieve too much…given the turnover rate of the student body." He also expressed concern about the time-consuming nature of decision-making, "you talk about something the first time and then by the second time you really haven't had time to think about it, you know, investigate something too much, and then by the third time my reign as president was about to be over and you couldn't get something accomplished."

Continuity was not just a challenge due to student turnover, but staff turnover as well. Joe commented that he "got to be on many search committees." Ralph also shared, "we didn't decide on who, but we were on the committee to help select people…the dean, the provost…the dean." The participants also shared perspectives about other campuses, especially those with high staff turnover. Ralph expressed concern about how the lack of continuity in administration could have a negative impact: "I felt like even after we hired some new people, like a new person in the administration, it was like they didn't know

the rules of the meeting…I remember some of the administrators had no clue what was going on."

Joe expressed concern for the limited impact both students and staff could make due to high turnover. "I don't know what difference it made in the future because once I left, I left…but my successor was not as committed to the job as I was probably. And that is the same continuity problem, it takes years to change that level of perception, if you don't have a strong succession of people in there."

While the participants did not specifically articulate employee turnover at the college as a contributing factor to the challenge of continuity, it is worth noting that this instability of administrative leadership could contribute to the participants' perceptions both in terms of continuity and in the perceived level of support.

Support

While Ralph and Duane made allowances that the lack of continuity created situations where some administrators were not capable of providing support, all participants shared situations in which the lack of support created challenges for them as SGA president. Joe, when describing the support he would or would not receive in his role, and particularly in committees, stated, "it depends on who else was involved. The president was not real receptive to anything I had to say, so anytime she was involved it was a little different. Any time she wasn't there, though, they were probably pretty receptive to what I had to say. That doesn't mean I always got what I wanted, but I found they would at least listen to me."

"By far the first [person] that comes to mind when you think about discouraging is the president," Buddy stated. He continued, "Now, maybe not initially, at first she puts on a good face acting like she is there for the students and wants good student participation, but as we got into budget hearings and dealing with her and other of her administrators it became obvious that was not the case." Duane also expressed concern about the president, "I don't know if that is a negligence on her behalf…but the whole time I was president I think I only…talked to her like two or three times." Juan responded, "With the president, forget it. There was no way to get in." But he added, "it was really the financial officer who would quickly stonewall you. You would call that office and get the run around,…well, it varied. I wouldn't be so quick to say it was just a vice president who would always stonewall…there were certain folks who were not going to stonewall the students per se…one of the assistant vice presidents of the college, she was very much a person who was very new to her job when I got there, and she was very much thinking of job security. Since she was relatively new, well I don't want to detract from this person, she was very nice to me outside of the meeting room, but it was kind of a two-faced nature we had to deal with. You could tell it was the voice of her superior talking, not her."

When describing his relationship with the college president, Ralph shared, "to be honest, I probably met her, I can count the times on my hand, [and] she actually said something besides hello." Ralph focused more on the campus-based administration, sharing, "the provost was another politician, but one of the more likely people to listen to me…the people more directly related to student government would listen to me, but the people higher up were less likely to listen. I remember when (a new administrator) got

there, he would just smile and shake hands and fake sincerity and I would see him at the next awards ceremony. It was kind of like the higher up you go, the less attention or caring, or just really giving a damn, I received from the administration."

Buddy shared a similar sentiment to Ralph's, but added an additional component. "I think geographic closeness of the administration to the students would influence the amount of knowledge they could have. The students closer to the upper administrators knew less than the students further away who were not under the direct influence of the administration." Buddy acknowledged that this seems opposite of what you might assume, that having closer access to upper administrators would mean you would have access to more information. Buddy explained, "Having people who were knowledgeable but also willing to pass along that knowledge to students was key. On some campuses the problem was the provost, who was a close ally to the president, so she had a strong-handed philosophy when it came to governing the campus. The one provost had line item veto power over all programming and decisions, so she could veto any decision made by the students without any explanation."

The participants did note that not all support issues were challenging. Many described positive and supportive relationships, but all with campuses-based leaders, none with college-wide administrators. Joe stated, "the faculty advisor…he really went to bat for us with the faculty. He was the kind of guy who didn't really care what the provost thought of him, he helped me out a lot. And my advisor, the director of student life." Buddy shared, "on the positive side, the student life director was the one who was there to encourage us, always giving us good information. Whether in a meeting or in simple talks, the student life director was always encouraging us to get our voices out

there, and not get discouraged because other administrators were putting us down or trying to limit the change we could bring to the school."

Duane felt, "our voice to our advisor was loud, and I believe from our advisor to the deans was loud, but beyond that I don't know. Juan also shared, "I had a very positive relationship with my dean of student affairs. She and I saw eye to eye on many issues, and she always had an open door policy with me." All participants expressed some positive regard for the advisor, the faculty advisor, and dean of students.

Prejudgment

An interesting and unexpected outcome that was initially raised by Juan, but confirmed in follow-up interviews with all the participants, was the strong role that prejudgment played in their sense of how they were perceived as the SGA president. When asked what else he desired to share, Juan responded, "I guess I would have asked the reactions from the administrators, was that something that was already preconceived in them, or did my predecessor, or predecessors, poison the well and so we're just not listening to this person. I think that weighted heavily, in terms of the success or failure of the student [president]."

Ralph strongly stated, "it all depends on the success of who came before you, like pardon my French, but if I would have had some dip shit who came before me I don't think I would have been listened to at all." Joe agreed, "Oh, there were definitely preconceived notions of what they had seen in student government in the past would definitely influence how they perceived student government when I was there." Buddy stated, "I'd definitely say all the SGA presidents were lumped together, and not so much

as a bunch of presidents elected to represent students, but, oh, they are just another group of student representatives/students…definitely we were never given an opportunity to prove ourselves as an individual or as a leader, but here we go again, with another year and another swan song." Duane felt, "I definitely wasn't treated as Duane the individual…I think I did come in with some preconceived notions about me." Juan concurred, "By the time I had gotten to my first committee meeting, I had already established some sort of a reputation."

Joe summarized the challenge nicely: "they expected the same thing they had always seen out of student government, and I can understand that, but it was definitely something at a two-year school, well at any school I guess, it is hard to change people's perception."

OBSERVATIONS

Tokenism

"As far as college-level committees, I was the 'token student' on the committee." Joe's description resonated with the other participants, all of whom felt they, at times, were a token to ensure it could be said that there was student representation. Joe claimed, "In fact, I can't think of a college-level committee where there was another student there beside me. It was always one student and ten or twelve non-students." Ralph stated, "Honestly, I think we were just left out of that completely. They would bring us in just to give our opinion, but not really take our suggestions to heart." Ralph did try to find the positive in tokenism, "if I was only one student in the group I certainly got listened to just because it would be completely politically incorrect to come out and interrupt me, but

how much did they actually listen to me, I don't know…to say I was actually listened to by all of them, even though they shut up and would act like they were listening, I can't say any of them would actually hear me." Ralph raises an important distinction between listening to the student representative versus hearing what the student has to say.

Buddy agreed, "It didn't really matter what we had to say. The administration had final say over everything!" Buddy continued, "I feel as if we were never truly encouraged to speak our minds at meetings dealing with any school policy. Instead, such meetings were pomp and circumstance and held for show. We [the student representative] were to be appreciative that we were even asked to partake in such honorable events and speak the company line, that is, what the administration wanted to hear from the students. Such opinions included support of whatever policy the administrators thought best for the school/campus."

Duane shared similar comments, "I'll just say flat out that really important decisions will be made by the top tier of the administration…yeah, sometimes they would ask our opinion or input, but I can't think of a single decision [where] we had our voice…how we felt wasn't really a factor in the final decision that was made."

Juan described his perception of tokenism as, "it was this odd sense that you were expendable, or at least a nuisance. It would be like 'welcome to our meeting, but." Juan shared a situation during his term when the number of student representatives on a committee was reduced and he questioned the rationale. He was told, "Well, the students hadn't attended this meeting this year so we'll cut the number of student representatives in half. When a committee was too big, the first people to go were the students. When we would point out, 'Well, this person, administrator or faculty member, missed the same

number of meetings, or even a greater number,' we would be told, well, that person is necessary."

Different committees had different numbers of student representatives, depending on the purposes of the committee. The College Advisory Board, the executive board that advised the college president, had one student representative, and it rotated among the student government presidents from the various campuses. When asked if the student representative had a vote on this executive board of the college, Juan stated, "No, not to the best of my knowledge. You had a vote in terms of the procedural vote, but it wasn't a vote that was recorded. When you look at the minutes your name didn't even show up, and no specific votes were recorded."

Buddy summarized the feeling expressed by all the participants nicely, "I always got the sense, it always seemed to me, that student opinion and student representation was something that was forced upon the administrators at Multimetro College from the state, either through their rules and bylaws or through rules handed down from the state legislature." The sense that the shared governance model was disingenuous permeated the theme of tokenism.

Predetermination

Related to, yet distinct from, tokenism was the perception that decisions were predetermined prior to input from the students. Juan was the most vocal on this issue: "That is one of the things that most SGA presidents don't know, that most of the decisions are already made outside of that meeting room, and by the time you go in to try and stem that tide it's either too late or you are very lucky if you actually succeed." Juan

described at length the "political machine" that controlled the college and made sure the correct outcomes were always reached by the committees. "There was a sense in those committees that when you walked in the room it was already a foregone conclusion…usually, if the student had not built any administrative alliances, once you enter that meeting room it was too late."

When discussing the various committees in which Joe could or could not vote, he concluded, "not that it would have made a whole lot of difference. Everything was set beforehand." Ralph shared some specific examples from committees on which he served, in particular a committee charged with giving input for a new campus facility, in which he was told, "the designs are already in place, thanks for your opinion." Ralph continued, "Specifically the budgetary meetings were frustrating because when we had an opinion it was often times disregarded…honestly I think we were just left out of that completely." Ralph shared another example, "I remember we had an issue, with the college newspaper, and we weren't really being represented at all, and we basically had to put what was considered our portion of the budget into it, and we couldn't really stop what was being spent there." Ralph went on to describe how the college newspaper, which was located at one campus but was supposed to represent all campuses, requested a fee increase from $20,000 to $30,000, yet claimed they were going online to save printing expenses. Ralph was successful in getting the increase blocked, but lost the fight to decrease the budget allocation. Yet, at a future meeting when the college newspaper budget was being reviewed, the account had $30,000 in it. Buddy also expressed concern about the level of input and ability to play a real role in decision making, "As for actual power, we had

none. As a result, what good was our opinion if we had no true ability to be sure opinion was turned into law?"

Duane described one very frustrating situation in which the students were trying to sponsor a concert and the campus administrators had predetermined that the concert was not acceptable. "The concert instance was one of the big things they already made their decisions about…among the administration [they said] I don't care what it takes, let's not let the students get this." Duane explained how he felt the administration gave him the runaround, "you know send it through the loops, and if they get through this we'll come up with something else, but you know this is not gonna happen and you know, just let them think they are getting somewhere, but we've made a decision and it's not gonna happen. And at the end of it, as I look back on it, it was kind of sad that it was like that." Duane described some of the exercises in futility that he was required to endure. Of particular interest to me was an argument about the image of the desired musical artist, who was African-American and performed mostly hip-hop. Duane shared comments that administrators made about "that artist might be OK for some campuses, but that musical style does not fit our overall demographic." The administrators also raised concern about the musical content, so Duane provided copies of all the lyrics to demonstrate that there was no profanity. Despite his best efforts, the concert never occurred. While Duane did not make any mention of racism or classism, those forms of discrimination immediately came to my mind as Duane was describing the administrators' responses.

Juan did feel there was some room for student influence despite the assumption of predetermination: "Once in the committee room, new information would need to be

pretty damning to get the committee to pause, and that is when the student would have enough power to at least table the issue, if that, but the information certainly needed to be of a nature that nobody had thought of, it would have had to be a complete failure of the imagination on the part of that committee for the student's voice to actually wield some sort of pause."

Control

One of the most salient themes from the data is the control that the participants perceived was exerted upon them by the college administration. A variety of mechanisms of control were described that served both to suppress and diminish student participation. The participants described mechanisms of manipulation including non-verbal cues in meetings, scheduling meetings when students were not available, dividing and conquering the student support base, coercing students through scholarships, threats of repercussions ranging from judicial action to loss of employment, stalling techniques such as tabling, burying in research, adding stipulations, and delaying action until students were no longer in their positions, and using a need for consensus as a means to eliminate public discourse. The need for control appears to be linked to a schism between the espoused democratic shared governance model and the practice of a more corporate approach with strong administrative control.

"At the college I kind of felt like the administration had such, well the president in particular, had such control over everything there wasn't a lot of difference we could make." Joe's broad statement was followed by a discussion of mechanisms in place to ensure students could not remain active. "There was a provision in the SGA constitution

that you couldn't hold office for more than two whole years…that lack of continuity, I think contributed a lot to why the administration wasn't real receptive to dealing with students. They kind of knew that if we stall them a little bit they will be gone next year, so it definitely put us at a disadvantage." The challenge of continuity discussed earlier, when a function of constitutional design, becomes a mechanism of control.

"From time to time if the administration wanted something for students, but it wasn't something we thought we needed, I remember getting a lot of grief over that." Ralph described his concern and frustration, adding, "I can remember specific instances where I stood up and said this is ridiculous, I can't believe we are spending this money…it is not serving its purpose…and we would find out [afterwards] they got more money, and it was kind of brushed off." Ralph stressed that logic isn't what drove decisions, but who wanted what and who knew who, "it was just like, and maybe I'm being prejudiced, but even if it made no sense we would do it anyway…they must have had a pull, like with the person running the meeting, it just made no sense."

Ralph also clearly described non-verbal cues that were used as mechanisms to suppress student input, "In the budget meeting, especially with the vice president, you'd get that sigh, the things that didn't officially go on the record. Those facial expressions, that attitude that would sway the rest of the people in the room." Ralph continued, "they wouldn't just blatantly do that [control students], but they might do it strategically, like change topics or something…they're politicians, man, and they are really good at it."

Buddy shared many of the same concerns, specifically about the college president: "there was a great ability for a president to manipulate the SGA into doing what she wanted." He stressed the limits of the advisory role students played,

juxtaposing the power of students ("as for actual power, we had none") against the college president, "All budgets she had final say over. Money rules the world, especially the academic world. Such power gave her indefinite power." Buddy concluded, "you hate to say it, but the president was more concerned about her world and helping herself from a business model, and not an academic model…the administrators [are] just looking at the economic viability of an institution and the students are looking more at quality."

Juan concurred that "the president was a person who clearly knew the mechanism and how to work the mechanism to get what she wanted…for example, she would direct her staff to schedule meetings at very inopportune times, or check your class schedule and schedule important meetings during your class. Pretty much make sure you couldn't attend. The vice presidents would do that, and the athletic director. You were dealing with people with their own little kingdoms." Like Juan, Duane described scheduling tactics that were used to diminish student participation, "If there was a committee that was going to conflict with my schedule I would try to get someone there, but sometimes no one could go…what would I say if the college president asked me 'are you skipping class right now?' Well, I am but I feel it is very important for me to be here…to be a part of all decisions being made you kind of can't get your education."

All participants described examples of last-minute meeting rescheduling, location changes, or "emergency" meetings being called via email with very limited notice. Most college-wide meetings were held on campuses other than the one these SGA presidents attended, and frequently these students would need to travel between thirty minutes and one hour one way to reach these other campuses, assuming they were not traveling during rush hour traffic. To attend a meeting at the campus where the college president was

located, which was the location furthest from the campus these SGA presidents attended, would typically require at least two hours of travel plus the time necessary for a committee meeting, which could typically range from one to three hours. Many participants felt that to be able to adequately represent the student body and be able to attend meetings they needed to schedule their classes at odd hours, in long blocks on one or two days, enroll in as few classes as possible, or skip many class periods, which might diminish faculty support.

Juan discussed the "divide and conquer" approach: "We would have an agreement that all the students would stand for this when we go into that meeting room, but that coalition was already fractured because of pressure placed on some students by upper administrators. My favorite was when a student actually got a scholarship the day prior, so when the vote came the next day she said she could no longer support this since she didn't pay for school anymore." Juan felt this was a perfect example of administrative control and interference. The provost on one of the smaller campuses was seeking student fee funding for special socials he offered for faculty and staff. The students did not feel that this was an appropriate use of student fees when students were not invited. Seeing the vote was going to pass to deny the funding, the chair "administratively tabled" this motion (which is not allowed in Robert's Rules of Order, but when the objection was raised the vice president declared as chair she had final say). The committee was to meet one week later, and the day prior to the meeting is when the student committee member representing that campus received a special presidential scholarship. When it came time to vote, the student abstained, and the motion to deny the funding failed. This was just one example of the many ways Juan described how he felt students were coerced,

manipulated, misinformed, and bribed, acknowledging "the peer pressure component of it…but there was a genuine disconnect on the issues we [the students] deemed were important [as opposed to the administration]."

In the example shared by Juan involving a vice president "administratively tabling" a motion in violation of Robert's Rules of Order, the impression I received from Juan was that the vice president knowingly and intentionally violated the rules of order. Ralph, though, shared some interesting remarks that might suggest a different explanation. Ralph stated, "We hired some new people, like a new person in the administration, it was like they didn't know the rules of the meeting. Like, they didn't even know Robert's Rules. I remember that some of the administrators had no clue what was going on." Ralph shared his concern not only about administrators, but also about other students, "one of the [SGA] vice presidents from another campus didn't know what 'abstain' meant and they used 'abstain' like every single vote." Ralph felt that there was a lack of consistent education about meeting procedures across the college.

Juan also described examples of pressure being placed upon staff and faculty to make sure they supported the administration and not the students. "Some advisors were more interested in getting their pay raise than in genuinely helping the students…there were those advisors who said look this is how it is but I can't support you." Even in committees, like student fee committees, where the membership had to be at least 50% students, Juan acknowledged, "If the chair was a student, yeah, we'd have a fighting chance, but there was never a student (chair). It was usually an administrator…whoever it was would ultimately say, 'you know I think the students are right, but you know this is my job so I have to vote this way.'" Typically the vice president served as chair, and

would cast the final vote in the event of a tie. Even though committee recommendations were not binding decisions, Juan felt the president didn't want to "look bad to the Regents" so she would make sure the committee decisions were aligned with her desires so she could say she adopted the recommendations of the committee. "There was one situation where we sent it up [the vote on a budget issue], it was directly affecting the President's account, I guess it was her expense account, and she requested a huge increase and we sacked the request. It came back the following week and she said 'no, this is unacceptable, vote again.' At that point it was very interesting because the committee was very unanimous about the slash, but when it came back, even though the students still held firm, you could tell in the administration there was this strong waiver, and I'm not sure if it was an issue of job security, but you could tell there was this sense like they were shaking in their boots" and the increase passed. In this particular example that Juan described, the college president had increased her discretionary account funded through student activities fees, which had traditionally been $5000, to $50,000 since these fees were unrestricted and could be used in ways state funds could not.

Juan claimed that pressure was not just felt by students to acquiesce, but at all levels of the college. "Sometimes I would get messages from my dean saying, 'I agree with what you did, but you can't keep doing it because I will feel the backlash,' or my advisor would say 'I believe in what you are doing but you can't do it because of this backlash.' There was one time when I was told that everyone agreed with what I was doing, but didn't want me to do it because we would all suffer, and that was very discouraging." Juan even described a direct conflict he had with the president, "I was threatened with a charge of inciting the students to riot, partly because I got aligned with

people against the president. If that's the cost of getting people to speak up, yeah I'm guilty of it." In this particular situation, there was a conflict about a change to the SGA constitution, and there was some confusion over the procedures required to change the constitution. Juan and some of his fellow SGA members had gained full support for the change from the three largest campuses, ensuring more than sufficient votes to pass. One of the centers, which had not yet been recognized as a campus and therefore constitutionally did not have a vote, objected to the change and declared that they would veto it if it came to a vote (the constitution did allow for any recognized SGA to veto a constitutional change, but there was some conflicting language in the constitution about what percentage of support was needed for the veto to be valid). Juan was highly frustrated since he and other SGA presidents prior to him had worked so hard to revise the constitution, so he responded to the objection by pointing out that the objecting SGA was from a center not a recognized campus, and therefore did not have college-wide voting authority according to the constitution. While Juan's advisor supported him in this measure and helped advance the constitutional changes, the objecting students from the center went to the college president, who "declared" them a recognized SGA, despite what the constitution said. Juan stood firm that it was not within the purview or authority of the college president to administratively trump the SGA constitution, after which he was summoned to a hearing with the college president and informed judiciary charges could be brought against him for student misconduct.

Juan was reacting to assumptions made about how he should as SGA president be acting, "There was a sense that student leaders were automatons being controlled and manipulated by others." Juan expressed that pressure was felt both by the SGA president

and the advisor: “There was this odd expectation that the advisor was the ‘real’ SGA president and would manipulate, cajole, persuade, convince, the SGA that they should make that decision.” For advisors who accepted that role, it made them part of the administrative machine of control, and for advisors who didn’t accept that role, it made them vulnerable to repercussions since they were at-will employees without some of the employment protection faculty might have through tenure and professional associations.

Duane also described what he considered coercion: “I think it’s a bad thing that you know the college is there for the students, but you know decisions were just made, but sometimes you’d hear, well, if you want those scholarships or eventually that student center you need to give up to get even a little in the end.” Duane continued, “I don’t know if conspiracy is the right word, but among administrators it was like, ‘I don’t care what it takes, let’s not let the students get this.’” Duane continued, “the administration was used to having their way, and if they didn’t, they would do whatever it would take to, not talk us down, but you know, if you could do this it would have such a great return, and though it might not happen while you are here, it will benefit the college in the future.”

In addition to the more direct forms of control described by all the participants, Duane described a more subtle approach of control: “Some SGAs were blind-sided, and not that some administrators were lying to them, but they weren’t quite telling them everything they could use to help benefit them. Like if Sue said she wanted some cookies, well, we aren’t going to tell them they are in the cabinet unless they ask if they are in the cabinet. Students would have all these questions, but not always the right

questions." Duane felt this failure to disclose was control by omission, and said, "advisors and administrators were like, they don't need to know all this."

Juan expressed concern about how the SGA president would be labeled and coerced, "There seemed to be this sense, and I wish I could say it is just one campus or college, but it seems to permeate system-wide that if an SGA president has talent or intelligence, let's see if he'll use his talents to push my agenda, the administrator's agenda, and if not, then we can very quickly label him as a renegade. During the time I was at the (central office) I was always asked, is this person out for themselves, or is this person willing to work within the system. It is guaranteed that that question, or some derivative of that question, will be asked every time, because you don't want this renegade element among your students."

Juan also shared, "I've realized that there is a systemic issue with the whole system wanting to maintain a certain external face and everyone shies away from disagreement. There is this sense that any public disagreement is bad, and everyone goes along and people and the system become ineffective. It wasn't just my own college, but across institutions."

These comments, coupled with Buddy's remarks that "what the administration wanted to hear from students (is to) speak the company line," raised a larger issue about what roles students, or for that matter faculty and staff, can play in a shared governance model that is purely advisory and is subservient to a corporate model which fully and solely empowered a president as a "CEO" of the institution. Ralph concluded, "It seems like some of the people holding the keys to the gate can let whoever they want in. It is pretty easy…and the people who do are like Enron…there is really nothing to keep

people from just changing things." According to their perspectives, the numerous mechanisms of control used to suppress and diminish input from various constituents coupled with a lack of openness to discourse may create a dictatorial state in institutions of higher education where token representatives engage in a farce of scripted activities, ultimately leading to the predetermined desired outcomes of a singularly controlled administrative unit.

Statewide Student Council (SSC)

Even though the focus of the interviews with the five participants was on their perceptions of decision making at their institution, all participants freely shared perspectives about their experiences at the state level with a group that I will refer to as the Statewide Student Council (SSC) for purposes of this study. An unexpected, yet consistent, sentiment expressed by most of participants was that they felt they had more of a voice through the SSC at the statewide level than they had at their home institution. Some even commented on this paradox, concluding that the issue was not a function of structure since logically a greater impact should be possible at a local rather than a state level, but a function of the individual personalities and philosophies of the players involved. All participants felt the college president was unresponsive and self-interested, yet they felt the administrators at the system level were more genuinely interested in hearing from them.

Joe shared, "the things I remember accomplishing in my career as a student leader were more having to do with SSC, the statewide type stuff. At the college I kind of felt like the administration, the president in particular, had such control over everything there

wasn't a lot of difference we could make." Joe described his experiences with SSC and his relationships with the two chancellors with whom he worked as very positive. "It's all about how receptive people are to your ideas, and it was always easier to deal with the chancellor or vice chancellors than the college president."

Ralph described how he felt being an officer on one committee within SSC was more rewarding and productive than being the SGA president, "like in the statewide student government I felt they listened to me even more, and that was more about the relationship between the students in the state…I found that at the statewide level there was a bigger voice." He also described how at the college, "you would think the people with the most power would spend the most time finding out what the needs are of the students, but it was unfortunately the other way around…people much lower on the totem pole were [more] effective." But at the statewide level, he felt there was greater access to higher administrators, and he even references emailing the governor.

Buddy concurred, "we had a lot more ability at the statewide level to influence, at least catch the ear of people who were more able, or at least a little more willing, to listen to student concerns and help bring about change, whether it was the associate vice chancellor or other aides and secretaries in the office."

The only participant who had a different view was Juan. He did not necessarily disagree that there was a lack of receptiveness at the institutional level, and he did see similar value in SSC as did his peers, but he was a bit more cynical in assuming the students had any real influence at the statewide level either. Juan was quick to point out "the way the [statewide] policy was written, it basically says in the last line the president is the ultimate budget manager, and he or she will form their decision based upon an

advisory committee, whose decision is not binding." While the other SGA presidents relied on statewide policy as a means of protection against the institution, Juan saw the policy as a way to appease the students while protecting the ultimate power of the institutional president. Juan also had a different perspective from his peers because of the time he spent working in the central office.

Outlook for the Future

Despite the cynicism and negativity expressed by all the participants about the level of participation students had in the institutional decision making process, most remained optimistic about the ability of students to initiate change, even if through confrontational means. David Callahan poses, "Why are Americans so optimistic? Because they are Americans. It's in their DNA" (2006, p. 15). Could the same be said of students? Optimism, and possibly even activism, is simply in their DNA.

Ralph, in describing a particularly positive experience he had with SSC, shared, "[we] organized, and emails went out, and we crashed the governor's server, and we protested in front of the capital . . . I remember that, remember stopping that bill that would have hurt the students of [our state]." In researching the situation that Ralph described, I was able to view a fascinating email written by the chancellor at the time to a staff member in the state system office expressing extreme displeasure that a student had "undone" his deal with the governor. The chancellor and governor had reached an agreement to shift student fees out from the existing state scholarship funding source, and require students to pay these fees themselves. While Ralph's recollections of student activism were documented in the SSC files, those files also indicated that one particular

student leader with a reputation for extreme tenacity was able to secure a personal audience with the governor, unbeknownst to the chancellor. At the conclusion of that meeting, the governor notified the chancellor that he had changed his mind and the student fees would continue to be covered by the state scholarship. While this is only one example, it does speak to those rare exceptions when students, and sometimes the lone voice of one student, can have significant impact on decision-making.

Many participants expressed positive regard for the experience of having served as SGA president and felt it enhanced their commitment to civil engagement and did not jade them toward the governance process. Duane concluded his interview with very strong emotion about his SGA experience: "You know how they have all those reality TV shows and after someone is kicked off you ask later if they would do it again, and I would say I would definitely do it all again. It was like an addiction . . . I've become like a politics fanatic . . . even with transferring to other schools I've tried staying involved, always wanting to know what is going on." Buddy also commented on his SGA experience, "I think it prepared me for involvement in a democratic model, because we still had to follow a constitution, and there were still many activities that were by democratic process." Juan directly credits his SGA experience with his desire for continued involvement with politics, and after completing his bachelor's degree he joined the staff of a gubernatorial candidate. While Joe remained pretty negative about his SGA experience, he was very positive about student involvement, particularly with his statewide involvement, "I think we were able to really accomplish a lot of really important things at the time. That [SSC], to me, was a lot better experience than student government was."

Buddy was probably the most future-focused of the participants, and concluded his final interview with these sentiments: “It’s true at every level, you have a handful of devoted individuals who are concerned about governance and representing the people, and those will be the ones who will make those choices, and you just have to hope we will have the right people stepping up to the plate.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

As I reflect on the data and the overall existential angst that seems to surround the perceptions of the students and much of the literature on the current state of higher education in America, I am drawn to a quote from Giroux, "politics has never been so powerfully exercised while governance so dreadfully ignored" (2006, p. x). This quote strikes me as an especially appropriate way to open the discussion and analysis of this study, particularly in light of Ralph's statement on college administrators, which captures an overarching sentiment expressed by all the participants, "they're politicians man, and they are really good at it." As an educational administrator myself, is this really what students think of me, and has the current state of the academy transformed me from the educator I once was to a politician? If so, it is my desire that this study will recapture the educative purpose that first called me, and many others, to actively engage with students and colleagues in the "community of learning."

Policy, Procedure, and Practice

Since formal decision-making is made through the established governance structure of an institution, and the governance structure is defined through policy, I first turn my attention to an analysis of policy. Beyond policy, institutions establish procedures that serve as the formal execution of policy, theoretically ensuring that the

letter and spirit of policy is followed. Beyond procedures are the actual practices, both formal and informal, that most often indicate the extent to which procedures do indeed execute policy. Policy is typically readily available in written forms that can be accessed via the Internet or formal institutional documents. Procedures should be codified and readily available (at least they typically are during the year an institution is seeking to be reaccredited), but are not always as easily accessible as policy. Practices, in theory, should mirror established procedures, though determining if this is so often requires investigation beyond institutional documents. In this section of the discussion and analysis, I seek to distinguish the implications of policy, procedure, and practice as they relate to student participation in institutional decision-making.

Through the shared governance model of Multimetro College there is a clear place for students in institutional decision-making. There is a clearly established Student Government Association at each campus, governed by a constitution, and student seats on most all the councils and committees that comprise the governance structure, up to and including the College Advisory Board. The structure codified within policy, however, is where the limitation becomes clear. Students may have a seat at the table (well, most of the tables), but is one seat sufficient for students to have meaningful input? Also, how meaningful is that seat if the student is a non-voting member, such as on the College Advisory Board? The student participants all described situations in which they felt like a “token” or issues were discussed by some members of the group prior to the meeting and outcomes were predetermined. Consider the composition described in chapter 4 of these committees and councils. They were heavily weighted with administrators, and the next largest representative group was faculty. There were few staff, and typically only

one student. When the student participants described the challenge of support, they identified feeling most supported by their advisor, a campus dean of students, or the faculty member who assisted in advising student government. They felt least supported by senior college administrators, namely the president and vice presidents. Yet, when serving on these committees and councils, the chairs were typically senior college administrators, and the mid-level administrators who the students felt offered them the most support were not typically involved. While the students felt a comfort level with some faculty, also recall that many of the faculty who served on these committees and councils were "selected" by a provost, or when elected, elected through a process often controlled by the provost. The faculty members who the students perceived were most supportive were not the faculty members typically serving on these committees. The shear design of these councils creates limits on student input. How many student leaders, especially traditional-age student leaders who are within their first to third year of college, will feel empowered to speak or ask questions when they are the lone student representative, possibly without a vote anyway, in a room of anywhere from eight to twenty "older adults," typically administrators and faculty, that the student perceives as unsupportive or possibly even hostile? If student input was truly desired, then the system is fundamentally flawed in its design, but if the perception of student input with no real student voice is the desired goal, then the system should achieve that which it was designed to create: a governance "sham" in the manner described by Falvey (1952) and Kolodny (1998).

At the statewide system level, there is a clear policy that speaks to the role students play in certain aspects of institutional decision-making, specifically in the

allocation of student fee funds, and in the request process for establishing new or increasing existing student fees. In fact, the student participants can quote by code numbers the policies that exist to ensure their rights. The student participants speak with great reverence of the hard-won battle for their rights at the statewide system level achieved by their predecessors, much the way verbal histories are passed from generation to generation by reminiscent elders.

Indeed, the policies that the students quote like scripture do exist, and on the surface appear to support an overarching philosophy of inclusion that values student input as members of the community of learning. Likewise, in reviewing minutes from meetings and proposition statements created by the Statewide Student Council to the state university system, there is much language to support this philosophical viewpoint: "Whereas, the Statewide Student Council represents the student body . . . Whereas, the mission of the State University System is to educate the students of the state . . ." As the statements continue, the consumerist perspective of these student leaders becomes clearer: "Whereas, student fees should be considered student money . . . Therefore, let it be resolved that all student fees shall be reviewed by a committee comprised of at least fifty percent students."

In arguing that they deserved greater control of their student fees (using a similar rationale as identified by Slaughter and Leslie [1997] in *Academic Capitalism*), the students successfully changed policy and waived the flag of student rights across the state, passing the flag on to each successive generation of student government leaders. What is not reflected in the minutes, nor is discussed among the students (except for brief acknowledgments as afterthoughts), is the limitation built into the new policy. The

students were seeking greater control of their own funds, yet the policy did not diminish administrative control, but to the contrary, it codified the advisory status of the students by creating advisory boards that appeared to make decisions about student fee use, but ultimately submitted recommendations to an administrator for approval. The policy reads:

> Proposals to increase mandatory student fees and proposals to create new mandatory student fees, submitted by an institution shall first be presented for advice and counsel to a committee at each institution composed of at least 50 percent students. Students shall be appointed by the institution's student government association.
> All mandatory student fees collected by an institution shall be budgeted and administered by the president using proper administrative procedures, which shall include the advice and counsel of an advisory committee composed of at least 50 percent students. Student shall be appointed by the institution's student government association.

Before turning my attention to procedural concerns, it is important to note shortcomings within the policy itself. Moving from a position of no formally recognized input, the policy above can be viewed as a step in the right direction by student leaders. However, the limitations are obvious. Well, I assume they are obvious since the policy clearly establishes the authority of the institutional president over all final budgetary decisions and the advisory role of the students, but most of the student participants in this study still clung to this policy as an insurance of inalienable rights, as did the language in the minutes and propositions from the statewide student body. I had the opportunity between the years of 1999 and 2004 to attend most of the statewide student council meetings, and within the past year attended two meetings so I could observe and listen to the students' discussions through the lens of this study. What I observed and heard even in these most recent meetings were statements such as "well my (insert any various administrators) can't just do what (she/he) wants with our money because we are

protected by policy (number XXX)," or "the student can petition to the Regents if our money is misspent because of the policy." I can only speculate that either the students are flexing their governance muscles for each other while away from their home campuses in what they perceive as a supportive and empowering environment, or they simply have not read and digested the actual language of the policy. Even the student participants in my study who seemed at one moment to fully understand the limitations of their decision-making power, in another moment would waive the flag of student activism and what "they" (meaning the statewide student council) were able to achieve. I sensed a position of limitation and acquiescence when students focused on their experiences at the college, but a position of optimism and influence when students focused on their experiences at the statewide level.

Even if we assume that the spirit of the policy is well-intentioned and college administrators genuinely desire meaningful student input and participation in institutional decision-making, there are procedural factors that serve to diminish the spirit of inclusion. Considering again the composition of committees and councils at Multimetro College, the procedure for selecting participants is suspect. As I mentioned earlier, the policy called for representatives to be elected by their peers, and student representatives were to be selected by the Student Government Association. The procedures, however, allowed the campus provosts to control the election process, which on some campuses became simply a selection process, even for student representatives. Likewise, on councils and committees that allowed student representatives, the vice president would designate which campus SGA would serve which years and on which councils or committees. The procedure called for a rotation process among the campuses, but the

rotation was fully controlled by the vice president, who at her or his discretion could alter the rotation, potentially excluding certain campuses, and thus certain student leaders, from participating.

A related procedural challenge was the length of terms for students compared to the terms for other council and committee members. Most rotating faculty and staff seats served a two-year term. Granted, student government representatives are elected annually; therefore, a two-year term might not be feasible. However, the student seats would not be filled until fall semester, which meant at best the August meeting or more realistically the September, or even October meeting. The students would vacate their seat at the end of the spring semester, which meant at best the May meeting, but more realistically the April meeting. For the typical council or committee, the students were at best only invited to two-thirds of the meetings. Committees that were comprised of at least 50% students, like the student fee committees, did not hold formal meetings until student representatives were identified, but administrative "pre-meetings" would occur in the months prior to the official committee convening. Some more vocal SGA presidents, who were typically elected in March or April and officially began their year of service in early May, would contact council or committee chairs to inquire about attending any summer meetings scheduled, with mixed results. One student participant, Juan, shared with me that he made numerous attempts to contact the vice president who chaired one council, including email, memorandum, and phone calls, but never received any response. Another student participant, Buddy, shared with me that he was able to make contact with one vice president who indicated that there were no meetings held during the summer, only "working sessions," but that he would be notified as soon as the first

meeting of the academic year was scheduled. He never received notice of the August meeting. After his advisor shared with him that the meeting had taken place, Buddy called the vice president, who apologized and claimed the invitation to the meeting must have been lost in inter-campus mail.

Numerous experiences shared by the participants indicate how procedure and practice deviated. The lack of communication, or modes of communication employed, with the student representatives created the largest practical barrier. Some councils and committees relied on traditional hierarchical structures of communication, allowing information to flow down from the chair, to a provost, to a dean, to a director who served as advisor to SGA, then to the students themselves. A breakdown, either intentional or unintentional, in this communication hierarchy left the students uninformed or misinformed. All participants also described examples of last-minute meeting rescheduling, location changes, or "emergency" meetings being called via email with very limited notice. Most college-wide meetings were held on campuses other than the one these SGA presidents attended, and frequently these students would need to travel between thirty minutes and one hour one way to reach these other campuses, assuming they were not traveling during rush hour traffic. To attend a meeting at the campus where the college president was located, which was the location furthest from the campus these SGA presidents attended, would typically require at least two hours of travel plus the time necessary for a committee meeting, which could typically range from one to three hours. Many participants felt that to be able to adequately represent the student body and be able to attend meetings they needed to schedule their classes at odd hours, in long blocks on one or two days, enroll in as few classes as possible, or skip many class

periods, which might diminish faculty support. The participants perceived these communication issues as a mode of administrative control, specifically employed to diminish their ability to participate in the shared governance process.

One issue of practice that was not mentioned by any of the student participants, and was not documented anywhere in policy or procedure, was the "closing" of meetings. Many states have laws about open government, sometimes referred to as "sunshine laws" requiring that official business of the state be conducted in a manner that is accessible to the public. During the student fee budget process, a faculty member who was not a member of the committee requested to attend the meetings, claiming it was her right to do so under the state's open meetings law. This same faculty member had previously requested to review the documents from the student fee budget meetings for the prior two years under the state's open records law. The open records request was granted and the "official" committee documents made available to the faculty member, but those documents only provided overviews of the process and final outcomes of recommendations forwarded to the college president. No meeting minutes were made available because those were not part of the "official" documents of the committee, nor were minutes distributed to the members of the committee. The chair had tape recorded the proceedings of the meeting, and notes were transcribed only to answer questions that might arise from the college president, but the chair indicated to the faculty member that those tapes and notes were destroyed after the budget recommendations were approved by the president. The faculty member then requested to attend the meetings, realizing that the documents captured by the open records request did not provide adequate details about the committee's discussions. The chair denied the faculty member the right to

attend the meetings, stating that the meetings were "closed" and did not fall under the state's open meetings law because this committee was an advisory body and not a decision-making body. The chair claimed state law only requires that meetings of decision-making bodies be open to the public. This same rationale was used by other councils and committees, and was technically supported by the shared governance policy documents, since none of the councils, assemblies, or committees were specifically empowered by policy to make decisions, but all functioned only as recommending bodies. In reviewing the open meetings law for the state where Multimetro College is located, I learned that indeed the law does include language that distinguishes a committee meeting "at which no final official action is to be taken shall not be deemed a 'meeting.'" Likewise, I found that the law differentiates for purposes of defining an "agency" the source of funding, specifically requiring an allocation of tax funds (and for non-profit agencies allocation of tax funds exceeding 33 1/3% of the funds received from all sources). Therefore, by letter of the law it appears that the chair was allowed to declare the meeting "closed," regardless of how severely the spirit of the law was violated.

One last issue of practice I am compelled to discuss, though again not raised directly as a concern by any of the student participants, concerns our increased reliance upon technology as a sole source of official documentation. In the fall of 2002, the statewide student fee policy that was adopted in 1999 appeared to "disappear" from the state university system policy manual, which is only available through the Internet. Student leaders across the state that had been quoting the policy and number by rote and emailing the web link to the policy to newly elected student government colleagues,

began calling the state university system office in a panic. The policy number previously associated with student fees now directed the web surfer to a policy about an eminent scholars endowment trust fund. With relatively minimal effort, the web surfer could search the site and shortly find a newly numbered, and somewhat revised, policy concerning student fees. During a periodic "clean up" of the policy manual, system office staff revised, combined, and reordered sections of the policy manual.

Given that this particular policy was created in response to a resolution submitted by the statewide student council, a courtesy email to that council's listserv could have avoided the momentary panic and flood of emails on the listserv ranging from mild questioning concerning the whereabouts of the policy to conspiracy theories about an evil plot to destroy the hard-won rights of the students. Both courtesy and irrationality aside, the larger issue to me is how easily and quickly an electronic medium can be altered, and what, if any, safeguards exist to ensure that governance policies and procedures are not altered without appropriate due process. Could it be that this unintended consequence of the shift to electronic mediums is similar to the Weberian notion of the unintended consequence of the Reformation fueling capitalism? Could it be that the internet is a byproduct of our present-day "iron cage of modernity" (Weber, 1958)? There is virtually no discussion of this issue in the literature, though some early work had been done to raise larger issues about potential conflicts surrounding mass computerization (Kling, 1996), and providing guidelines for appropriate protection of electronic information (Duggan, 1991). Hopefully, at some level of an institution, documentation exists tracking the various iterations that come to life and those that were removed, but how is that information made available for public review? For example, in conducting my research,

I relied heavily upon online documents since many of these items were not available in any other format. I printed most of these items at the point of initial access. Recently when conducting follow-up research, I learned that some policy documents at Multimetro College had changed, and the original documents were no longer available online. I contacted numerous sources at the college seeking assistance in acquiring the previous version of the policy only to be told it no longer existed. For fear of sounding paranoid as though we have fallen into the "net" and our entire reality is at the whim of some web master, I believe we need to be mindful of what checks and balances exist in information technology, and how our reliance on these technologies may condemn us to a presentism devoid of historical context. As Giroux (2006) notes, "media no longer merely transmit information; they create, reorder, and refigure it in ways that make obsolete older notions of literacy, agency, technology, and communication" (p. 6).

Corporatization and Democracy

I find myself in a very difficult place. As an educator I am fully steeped in the philosophical perspectives of Dewey, Wolff, Giroux, and others, that espouse critical discourse, engaged educative experiences, and community action creating public spaces that cultivate a democratic society. At the same time, I am very attuned to the current state of finance in higher education, and the growing pressure to utilize private partners to acquire goods and services that are often perceived as critical to attracting and retaining students. I wish I had the luxury of standing on my philosophical high ground, inflexible to the market forces that are shaping both our students and the ways in which we attract, retain, and educate them. For me, the most fundamental reality of higher education is

that without students there is no purpose for the institution to exist. By the same token, without citizens, there is no need for government to exist. These symbiotic relationships, to be growth-producing in the Deweyan sense for all members of the community, must reconcile the conflict between the forces of corporatization and those of democracy.

The forces of corporatization at Multimetro College became clearer and clearer as the student participants shared their perceptions, particularly of the college president. Stories of tight administrative control and downright manipulation, including potential financial impropriety, speak volumes about the corporate manner in which this institution was operating, despite great efforts to create airs of shared governance. Aronowitz (2000) expresses legitimate concern about the lack of true functionality in current institutional governance: "Decisions are never final. They remain in essence recommendations, because administration retains its right to exercise veto power" (p. 166). The administrative veto without recourse is clearly corporate in philosophy, and lacks any democratic check and balance that would otherwise provide some level of protection against institutional presidents operating like omnipotent CEOs, or as Cahn (1979) suggests, oligarchs. Aronowitz (2000) offers: "My proposal for faculty-student dominance in governance may be perceived as a partial return to tradition, but they are in the service of democracy" (p. 167). I believe the students would share in this argument, but is their interest the service of democracy?

I am a bit disheartened that my student participants, while equally committed to active student engagement in the institutional decision-making process, were not necessarily committed to these aims for the same reasons I am espousing. All the student participants articulated the importance of student involvement for budgetary reasons,

arguing from strong consumer positions about having a say in how "their money" was being spent. These arguments smack of participatory democracy grounded in a "no taxation without representation" viewpoint. All of the student participants, much to my surprise and chagrin, were also quick to grant authority to other constituencies for institutional functions that they felt had no direct consequence for students. For instance, none of the participants felt any need to be involved in academic affairs, which was being defined loosely as "activities within the classroom." Juan was most direct in stating, "There is no reason why students should be involved in any areas of academic instruction." His rationale was that "those areas are not internal to students, they don't affect their pocketbooks." Duane was the only participant to directly discuss any role where he felt students could be valuable regarding an academic matter, and that was in adjudicating grade appeals as a member of a committee. Duane also described this as "the best example of where we had faculty and students and administration making decisions together" and one of "the few examples of decisions where students voices were heard" referring both to his voice as a member of the decision-making panel, and the voice of the student requesting the grade appeal.

Realizing how deeply ingrained the consumerist mentality is in these students, and how they argued for their right of representation through a lens of participatory democracy, it makes me reflect on Wolff's (1969) conclusion that "the principle of participatory democracy is an expression of alienation, not a demand for community" (p. 126). I share Giroux's (2006) concern, particularly as I reflect on these students, that "the obligations of citizenship are reduced to the imperatives of consumerism" (p. 254).

When I also consider the confrontational nature that each student participant described with the college president, it makes me reflect on a point raised by Dewey (1939):

> Distrust gives both the rabble-rouser and the would-be dictator their opportunities. The former speaks in words for the oppressed mass against oppression; in historic fact he has usually been an agent, willing or unknowing, of a new form of oppression. As Huey Long is reported to have said, Fascism would come in this country under the name of protecting democracy from its enemies. (p. 68)

It is too tempting to blame the students for their consumerist mentality, and, like the student participants in this study, write off those apathetic student masses as creating their own disjointed educational failures.

I grow concerned when reviewing Hirsch and Weber's (2001) discussion of the role students should and should not play in higher education governance, specifically "as students lack a general view and cannot have a sense of continuity for the university, they should not have any decision power regarding strategic issues" (p. 84). While I agree, as the student participants in this study discussed, that continuity is a challenge, the answer is not blaming the students for their limited view and completely disconnecting the students from strategic issue, but quite the contrary, we must take responsibility for current shortcomings and engage the students in a manner that creates a shared view. The solution must involve educating students about the mutually beneficial need for their involvement, investing the time to engage dialogue and valuing that dialogue even if it is uninformed or contradictory, and being willing to alter existing governance structures that inhibit meaningful participation.

Gould (2003) discusses what he calls "market hegemony" and how corporatization has "had a damaging effect on liberal and democratic education" (p. 31-32). In response, Gould draws on Deweyan pragmatism as a means to reconstruct

experiences to engage active participation in problem solving. This model of engaging students in identifying shared problems and seeking collaborative solutions is exactly what institutional decision-making should be about. Gould reminds us that "democracy, after all, is a conscious cultural choice" (p. 219), yet seems to suggest that this choice is not mutually exclusive with a consumerist culture if the business of education can be separate from, even co-exist with, a democratic education. Gould seems to allow some space for striking a balance with corporatization and democracy.

Creating Agency Among the Silenced Voices

There simply are no easy solutions to the challenges that face us today in higher education. The data collected for this study reinforced for me how alienated our students are, how focused they are on corporate means and ends, and how few meaningful educative experiences they enjoy, at least within the arena of shared governance. Have our students fallen into the "democratic vacuum" that Shor (1996) describes? Have they fallen victim to a post 9/11 discourse that equates dissent with treason, as Giroux (2004, p. 3) describes? Certainly the experiences shared by the student participants reinforce this view, particularly the three that served after 9/11. Ralph states, he was to "speak the company line." Buddy states, "students didn't want to vote differently" in meetings. Duane states, he "felt like he couldn't disagree" in committee meetings. Juan describes the pressure of "group think" and states, "I wish I had the power to protest, and more power to have my voice heard." What compelling force made these SGA presidents feel like they could not disagree in meetings, or voice an opinion that deviated from others? I believe Giroux is correct in his assessment, particularly in post 9/11 America. The fear

of dissent is not just pervasive among our students. I, too, on numerous occasions have sat in meetings when a vote is called and eyes glance from one side of the room to the next to gauge the "collective opinion" and as the first hand or two begins to raise, the rest respond like lemmings. This is, assuming a vote is called. Again, purely anecdotally, I have noticed a distributing trend over the past few years not only within higher education, but also within my homeowner's association, and other civic groups and professional associations, that voting is no longer popular or even necessary. Polite, non-confrontational, discussion may ensue, but most frequently concludes in some unspoken or barely articulated group acquiescence. You may even hear, "as long as nobody objects, we'll move forward," which is language veiled in anti-democratic sentiment that suggests to object would render one an outcast, socially unacceptable, a dissident, or even anti-American.

Giroux (2004) offers us some direction:

> Educators now face the daunting challenge of creating new discourses, pedagogical practices, and collective strategies that will offer students and others the hope and tools necessary to revive the culture of politics as an ethical response to the demise of democratic public life. Such a challenge demands that we struggle to keep alive those institutional spaces, forums, and public spheres that support and defend critical education; help students come to terms with their own power as individuals and social agents; provide the pedagogical conditions for students to learn how to take risks; exercise civic courage; and engage in teaching and research that is socially responsible while refusing to surrender our knowledge and skills to the highest bidder. (p. 9)

In the conversation of agency and creating new discourses, I would be remiss if I didn't clarify my viewpoint on the notion of truth. In chapter one I briefly discuss the truth-seeking nature of Wolff's community of learning, and reference Kant and his connection between truth and learning. In our current political climate where notions of "truth" are presented as absolute and infallible, regardless of the ability of substantiation,

it is imperative that my meaning of truth not be misconstrued in any positivist way. Any reference to truth contained herein is not a Platonic notion of "Truth," but a Deweyan concept of truth, based on warranted assertability. This notion of truth is critically linked to Dewey's conception of education as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience.

As I raise concern for the students and their self-imposed limits, much as Foucault would describe docile bodies and the process through which you make yourself irrelevant through conformity (Rabinow, 1984), I also believe that there is room for agency, especially through projects like Freire's (2000) and Shor's (1996). The student participants in this study, despite all other cynicism, remained optimistic about their own ability, and the ability of other students, to initiate change. Dewey's primary conditions for growth, plasticity and immaturity, are still alive and well in these students. As Juan acknowledged, "I knew there was a big gap between what I knew and what other people who were sitting in the room knew." Juan demonstrated his plasticity, particularly in his discussions about his relationship with his advisor, whom he saw as a mentor. Duane, in discussing his view of his faculty members, shared how much they "loved their profession," and how they "had seen lots of things go on in education" and he could learn much from them. Juan and Duane most vocally expressed the malleability that marks Dewey's plasticity. All five participants expressed sentiments of immaturity in the Deweyan sense, demonstrating their potential and desire for growth as student leaders. The challenge now lies with us to awaken this democratic spirit and nourish it through intentional and systematic efforts within our institutions of higher education.

In discussing the silenced voices here, I have focused specifically on students. Other constituencies' voices may be equally silenced, and the need to create agency for all silenced voices is critical. However, I must also caution those who engage with our students to be mindful of unintentionally, or even worse intentionally, manipulating the student voice for personal ends. Juan briefly discussed in both a positive and cautious light how faculty members would engage him to advance their causes. Disenfranchised staff and faculty can too easily use the students to voice their own discontent to administration, possibly thinking they exude good intentions, while misguiding the students into believing the voice is their own. While it may be true that students can say and do things without the same level of recourse that untenured (and maybe even tenured) faculty and staff might endure, we must be ever mindful of our personal and professional ethics. Providing that students are genuinely in agreement on expressed issues, the collaboration between students, faculty, and staff can create a powerful voice to advance these commonly experienced challenges, but some mechanism of check and balance should be employed to ensure parity.

Implications and Questions for Future Research

This study provides just a snapshot of one group of SGA presidents from one campus within one two-year college within one university system in the southeastern United States of America. While it is just a snapshot, this picture tells a rich and vibrant story about the perceptions of these five students and the limitations, whether externally or self-imposed, they experienced while trying to engage in institutional decision-making through a shared governance structure. The data categories describe roles, challenges,

and observations perceived by these five students, and multiple themes emerge within each category. I am particularly concerned about the challenges and observations, and feel these are the areas most in need of future research.

By design, the focus of this study was the perception of student leaders, specifically student government presidents, but this intentional design creates some limitations I wish to acknowledge. Other constituencies' perceptions were not investigated, specifically administrators and faculty. An analysis of competing perceptions from various constituencies would have been interesting. Likewise, while my intention was to seek transferability, and I believe to some degree this study has achieved that end, without further research to investigate a broader scope and audience, this transferability may be limited.

While I specifically bound the population for this study by selecting a specific timeframe of service, doing so created some limitations. This population included some racial and cultural diversity, but no gender diversity. Some perceptions of these participants could have been gendered, particularly in conjunction with their interactions with mostly female administrators. I would have found it interesting to compare the perceptions of a female SGA president to those of her male counterparts.

My specific interest for this study was a two-year college, but being a multi-campus institution I found it difficult at times to distinguish when the students were describing a college-wide situation versus a campus-specific situation. I resolved these confusions in follow-up interviews, but the structure of the institution presented multiple layers that could have been explored further. A larger study could consider multiple institutional types within the same system, providing additional clarity on the interactions

of other student leaders with their own institutional administrators as well as their interactions with the state system. It was difficult to fully ascertain if the perceptions of these student participants were unique in their view of system-wide responsiveness to students. It appeared almost counterintuitive to me that these SGA presidents would perceive having a greater voice as individuals at a system-wide level than at their own campus or college. I also question if their perceptions of the system were a reaction to negative experiences with their institutional president, more so than a direct result of positive experiences specifically at the state level. In contrast to the significant disdain that all five participants seemed to have for their institutional president, key personnel at the system office seemed to receive an unsubstantiated position of elevation and admiration.

Through this study, and my professional involvement with college students over the past decade and a half, I have developed some perspectives of my own I wish to share. While all of these thoughts relate in some way to the purpose of this study, some may seem tangential.

First, I am forever committed to higher education and the critical value it provides to both individuals and society. However, for the types of change I advocate through this study, college may be too late. Integration of decision-making models that actively engage students in the democratic process must begin early in life, at least in the K-12 system if not before. A social and educational revolution may be required to realize a society even reminiscent of the utopian notions I espouse. What I have in mind would incorporate the engaged pedagogy of bell hooks (1994), the critical pedagogy of Giroux and Giroux (2004), the dialogics of Friere (2000), while employing Apple's (2000)

curricular considerations. Glimpses of student involvement are visible at lower levels (Sansbury, 2001), though the same concerns that exist for systematic silencing of student voices in college are even more salient in K-12. I am hopeful that even small symbolic shifts, like changing the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) to the PTSA (Parent Teacher Student Association), indicate the start of meaningful integration of students into our social thought.

Second, while student learning is, or should be, at the heart of the academy, the site of such learning is not and cannot be viewed as primarily within the classroom or predominantly the bailiwick of the faculty. Meaningful, dare I suggest more meaningful, learning sometimes occurs in the residence halls, in the cafeteria, on the quad or campus green, or even in a vehicle desperately seeking a space to park. Both within student affairs and academic affairs, much has been written about the value of holistic learning both within and outside the classroom (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). The artificial separations and self-imposed silos are counterproductive to meaningful discourse. Let shared dialogue and common purposes create the boundaries of our communities and sub-communities, and realign our educational coalitions across functional monikers.

Third, we must do more than simply sigh anxiously about how students have changed over the years and place blame upon them, or their parents, for their shortcomings and limitations. Whether or not we subscribe to generational research describing the unique characteristics of the “Millennial” students with their “helicopter” parents hovering in tow (Howe & Strauss, 2003), we must engage the diversity and uniqueness of our students, both actively listening to and hearing what they have to say,

and then guide them in a Deweyan fashion through educative experiences. I have throughout my career exerted significant energies attempting to empower students, often finding that my means of empowerment is not theirs. I desperately want our students to want to be engaged in decision-making, yet I find that many of these "Millennials" (at the risk of essentializing them into an "other") have not had to develop decision-making capacities because their lives have been constructed for them, typically by their parents. Clearly, this is not the case with all students, but we cannot ignore the increased involvement of parents in the daily lives of their college students, and we need be open to the possibility that engaging students might mean creating transitional experiences that engage and educate parents as well.

Fourth, student advising is critical. Advising, for me, encompasses a holistic approach that considers the intellectual, social, ethical, civic, and identity development of the student both as an individual and in a community context (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Given the scope of this study, I will specifically focus here on the role of an advisor to student government leaders. All five student participants identified the critical role of the advisor, and shared numerous examples and experience where the advisor either could "thwart" or "propel" their growth as a student leader (borrowing from Dewey's mis-educative and educative conceptions of experience). Numerous authors discuss the critical role of the advisor, particularly in a two-year college setting, especially in combating the challenges of apathy, continuity, and support that are identified as themes in this study (Baker & Miller, 1976; Cooper, 1994; Deegan, 1970; Eklund-Leen & Young, 1997; Nussbaum, 1990; Otiz, 1995; Singer, 1994). Fully investigating the role of the advisor would

consume its own research project, and one I hope to explore in the future. Specifically, I am curious about students' perceptions of advisors who are faculty versus staff, the impact of cross-functional advising teams, and the limitations on meaningful advising due to administrative pressure and institutional politics. Based on my current perspectives, I would advocate some form of employment protection for advisors to afford them the same intellectual freedom that is paramount for faculty.

Fifth, and last, maybe there is something to be said for "adhocracy." I draw on both Creamer's (1975) notion of adhocracy as a governance model of "adaptation," and Kelley's (1978) notion of "participation on your own terms." Traditional bureaucratic structures have been problematic, and corporate models are creating significant limitations to shared governance and democratic and civic engagement. Especially in the two-year college sector where the transitory nature of the students creates an institutional culture of constant flux, maybe an adhocratic approach could be liberating, creating new spaces for discourse that was previously stifled by limiting structures.

The concept of adhocracy, with diminished formal student leadership hierarchies, may appear counterintuitive to increasing student voice. Even as I conceptualize an adhocratic approach, I fear unintentionally diminishing or destroying the student voice, allowing the administration to function in a bureaucratic vacuum. Administrators who may be willing to acknowledge a single student representative, typically the student government president, may be less likely to afford comparable credibility to students who serve in an informal or transitory manner. Likewise, students participating in an ad hoc capacity may be insufficiently informed and experienced to represent their peers in a meaningful manner. I envision adhocracy in practice in higher education as an intricate

web of empowered functional "committees" that serve a fairly narrow and specific purpose for a limited period of time, charged to define, research, and address a problem, then working in collaboration with other such bodies to explore feasibility and implementation. I liken this governance approach to an integration of the classic democratic town hall meeting with tribal caucuses, allowing a rotational participation that is not necessarily connected to the popularism and politics of a representative republic.

The appropriateness of any decision-making model, in my mind, lies solely with the intended goals of the governance structure. If a primary goal is inclusiveness or maximizing participation from potentially disparate voices, then adhocracy might be the best choice. If the goal is timely and efficient decision-making with minimal disruption and conflict, then adhocracy may not be the appropriate choice, unless it were administratively manipulated, which adds no benefit when compared with existing bureaucratic structures. It seems that superimposing a corporate governance structure into higher education creates, at best, a benign dictatorship, and at worst, an oligarchy. Adhocracy could potentially create room for increased efficiencies in certain routinized aspects of higher education that may become bogged down in current bureaucratic structures, while creating a space for meaningful and diverse participation in the aspects of higher education that surround the core values of the community of learning.

Similar to advising, there is a small body of research that has considered this issue, though not recently or sufficiently (Chalick, 1974; Creamer, 1975; Deegan, 1970; Kelley, 1978; Stupak, 1970). I believe this topic is worthy of future research, and wonder if elements of adhocracy could offer a middle ground to the juxtaposition of currently competing governance models in higher education. Much more work is needed in this

area, and we must create a safe space in our community of learning that empowers us to declare publicly, “the emperor is wearing no clothes,” and not live in constant fear of the naked emperor who only believes he is wearing clothes because we allow him to.

Like any thoughtful and critical project, I hope to have raised significant questions and considerations for future research, and believe this study has contributed to the conversations on shared governance, institutional decision-making, and the roles students can and should play in these arenas. We face serious challenges, but we must engage ourselves, and our students, in democratic projects that embrace our and their diversity and connect us and them to a civic continuity that reaches beyond our and their time in our institutions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

The survey below was distributed via email to the Statewide Student Council listserv for the same state university system of focus in this study, yielding five responses (posted to listserv October 29, 2001 and November 12, 2001). The survey was also distributed via telephone to three respondents (November 20, 2001). The survey was also distributed to three non-student employees at a two-year college within the state university system (via email November 12, 2001). This survey was part of a research paper titled "The Role of Students in the Governance of Colleges and Universities" for a course on Organizational Governance in Higher Education at Georgia State University, submitted December 6, 2001. The course designation is EPHE8350 and the instructor was Dr. Philo Hutcheson.

Questions:

1. Are students involved in institutional governance at your college/university/campus? If yes in what capacity and on what committees, councils, and/or assemblies? How many students serve on each?
2. Do students who hold a seat on a college/university/campus council, assembly, or committee have a vote?
3. When decisions are made at your school, are students consulted prior?
4. What level of decision-making authority do student leaders have at your school?
5. How do students as a whole perceive their role in institutional governance? Does the reality of the student role match the perception?
6. Should students have more, less, or about the same role and/or authority in institutional governance (i.e., play a greater, reduced, or equal role)? Why?
7. What is the primary area of concern in which students need to play a role in institutional governance? The second most important area? Please include specific examples.
8. What is your role (leadership positions, etc.) at your school/campus?

9. What school/campus do you currently attend? Have you previously attended any others? How long have you attended each institution?
10. Do you prefer to have your identity and that of your school/campus remain confidential, or is it alright to directly quote you?

This brief survey comprised of ten multi-part questions was sent via email to the Statewide Student Council (SSC) listserv. Student Government Association (SGA) leaders from 28 of the 34 state institutions currently subscribe to this listserv. The majority of subscribers are SGA presidents, but other officers, committee chairs, SSC leaders, former student leaders, faculty and staff advisors, University System employees, and regents may subscribe. The survey specifically requested responses from current student leaders only. After an initial request, and a follow-up request ten days later, five completed surveys were returned via email. Due to the very low response rate, three student leaders who are active both at the institutional level and state level, and who failed to respond via email, were contacted and interviewed via telephone. All student respondents either are currently enrolled in a two-year institution or were previously enrolled in a two-year institution in the state university system. To gauge the student responses with those of other constituencies, a faculty member, a student affairs administrator, and a secretary in a student services office were asked the same interview questions. These three respondents are all currently employed at the same two-year institution in the state university system.

Of the eight student respondents, all indicated that students played some role in institutional governance, and all agreed that students should play an increased role. There was confusion among the respondents about whether students currently hold seats

on certain councils and if they have a vote. For the most part the students felt that they were consulted for their opinions prior to decision-making, and that their opinions mattered. They were realistic about the level of authority (or lack thereof) that student leaders have, and all acknowledged that students as a whole do not perceive that they have a positive or direct impact on institutional governance.

The primary area of concern for the student respondents was increasing their role in fiscal affairs of the institution, predominantly regarding student fee funds. The sentiment was best summarized by one student respondent who equated limited student involvement with student fee funds to taxation without representation. The next most important area of concern for the student respondents was increasing their role in student service policies, specifically relating to co-curricular and student life functions. Examples provided ranged from posting and facility usage policies to auxiliary services functions such as bookstore and food service selection and pricing. Few responses related to academic functions, and those few were concerned with grade equity, flexibility of class schedules, and the utilization of faculty class evaluations. Overall, the primary concerns of the student respondents focused on consumer issues and students' ability to directly impact change and/or improvement in goods and services provided by colleges and universities primarily for students.

The three non-student respondents also were generally in agreement that students should have an increased role in institutional governance, but all included caveats to that statement. All three indicated a need for intelligent and highly trained student leaders, and expressed concern with students who lack sufficient information and commitment to be adequately involved in the governance process. The secretarial support staff member

expressed specific concern with student follow-through, and the potentially negative outcomes of popular elections. The faculty member also referenced follow-through issues, but added concerns with adequate planning and appreciation for the depth and breadth necessary when engaging in co-curricular programming. The student affairs administrator vehemently supported increasing the students' role in all levels and forms of governance, but was cautious in adding the caveat "after fixed costs and programming needs have been established." While this limited sample cannot adequately represent any significant conclusions, the message clearly received from all respondents was pro-student, at least conceptually, with reservations in practice.

APPENDIX B

Below are initial interview questions that were used as a guide in discussions with participants. Since the interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner, the responses guided the order and flow of questions, as well as the addition of new questions. The questions below were designed to engage broad, open dialogue. In reframing responses, clarifying questions were also utilized.

1. Describe the responsibilities of being an SGA president.
2. Of the responsibilities you just described, could you rank order them starting with the most important?
3. If I were to ask your college president during the time you served as SGA president to describe the responsibilities of SGA president, what might s/he say?
4. Describe the types of decisions an SGA president makes.
5. What kinds of decisions can the SGA president make alone?
6. What kinds of decisions can the SGA president not make alone?
7. If I were to ask your college president during the time you served as SGA president, what kinds of decisions would s/he say the SGA president can make?
8. Describe situations in which the SGA president is asked for his/her opinion, and by whom is he/she asked?

9. Of those situations, which ones occur in formal settings, like committee meeting?
10. Of the situations that occur in (formal settings – specify the setting based on responses to question 10), describe the role the SGA president plays.
11. Who are the other participants in these formal settings?
12. What roles are the other participants playing?
13. Describe an experience in which you as SGA president were in a formal setting where college policies were being discussed.
14. Describe your role in that situation, and the roles of others.
15. Describe situations in which you as SGA president were encouraged to participate in meetings.
16. Who specifically provided this encouragement, and how?
17. Describe situations in which you as SGA president were discouraged from participating in meetings.
18. Who specifically provided this discouragement, and how?
19. What kinds of decisions are made at your college by the college president?
20. Who are other people at your college involved in making decisions?
21. What types of decisions do each of these people make?
22. Describe the process or processes for changing a policy at your college.
23. Describe the process or processes you believe should occur for changing a policy at your college.
24. Other than you as SGA president, what other students are involved in making decisions at the college?
25. Describe the ways in which these students are involved.