Closing up shop: Meditations on the departmental/programmatic elimination experience

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CLOSING UP SHOP:
MEDITATIONS ON THE DEPARTMENTAL/PROGRAMMATIC
ELIMINATION EXPERIENCE

by

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Bachelor of Arts in History
University of South Florida
2006

Master of Arts in American History
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

Closing Up Shop:
Meditations on the Departmental/Programmatic Elimination Experience

By

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Departmental and programmatic eliminations represent a new paradigm in the history of American higher education. Hastened by a national economic recession and competing state funding priorities, public post-secondary institutions have turned to academic attrition as a solution to continuous budgetary shortfalls. As a means of addressing the lived experience of faculty members and department chairs, the following qualitative case study explores perceptions of implementing departmental and/or programmatic eliminations.

Utilizing uncertainty reduction theory as a conceptual framework, interviewed faculty in saved units experienced considerable strategic uncertainty, failing to understand why they had been selected for elimination. Guided by a college-wide strategic planning process, faculty in eliminated units understood the rationale for abolishing departments, though they experienced considerable structural uncertainty in terms of adjusting to a new, non-academic reporting structure. These findings indicate that a transparent strategic planning process diminishes strategic uncertainty, while the elimination of traditional departmental structures heightens structural uncertainty.
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Don't accept that what's happening
Is just a case of others' suffering
Or you'll find that you're joining in
The turning away

--Pink Floyd, On the Turning Away

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview

Formerly the favorite son of American enterprise, higher education has become the tortured stepchild of state government. Too valuable to expel and too large to sustain, public institutions walk a precarious line between dependence and autonomy. As such, while Medicaid, corrections, public safety, and K-12 compulsory education consume ever-increasing shares of state budgets, the percentage of public aid allocated to higher education continues to dwindle (Holmwood & Bhambra, 2012; Hovey, 1999). With an ability to generate instant income via tuition increases, public colleges and universities are often prime targets for reductions in state-level appropriations during periods of economic recession (Slaughter, 1993). Functioning as a budgetary balance wheel, higher education’s revenue-generating capability allows the state to shift its scarce fiscal resources to those entities which have no financial failsafe (Okunade, 2004). However, while tuition increases may help to balance the state’s budget, this inequitable public policy has forced many institutions to walk a precarious line between affordability and accessibility of educational services (Kissler, 1997).

With the entrenched model of exponential growth supplanted by the economic reality of recession, departmental and programmatic eliminations have become a new paradigm in higher education (Crano, 1995; Eckel, 2003; Fedler, Carey, & Counts, 1998; Reinardy & Halter, 1994; Seiler, 1995). Indeed, as higher education slowly recovers from the most recent financial downturn, anecdotal accounts have become increasingly common, underscoring the scope and breadth of the nation’s academic reversals (Carlson,
Though it is undeniable that this phenomenon is sweeping the scholarly community, academic literature addressing the lived experience of eliminating a department or program is noticeably lacking. By exploring the perceptions of faculty and department chairs in eliminated units, it may be possible to contribute to the intellectual discourse on an under-researched, though increasingly prevalent facet of academic life.

**Review of the Literature**

The literature on departmental/programmatic discontinuance tends to address two broad categories: historical/financial context and human actions/agency. Provided the emergent nature of academic attrition, it is imperative to chronicle both the historical and financial forces which have combined to create this phenomenon, and the effect that this phenomenon has had upon individuals in the academy. Though recent scholarly works have combined these interrelated categories, the preponderance of scholarship treats these issues as separate constructs. The following literature review attempts to outline the confluence of events which has precipitated this paradigm, providing additional context for this emergent trend in American higher education.

Predicated upon mutual beneficence, the “social contract” between the federal government and higher education has changed dramatically since its post-war inception (Perorazio, 2001). Forged in 1944 with the passage of the GI Bill, this groundbreaking legislation granted WWII veterans a free collegiate education based upon length of military service (Thomas, 1997). Though the GI Bill did not place restrictions on courses of study, many veterans selected disciplines which closely matched their military roles (Thomas, 1997). In this manner, the federal government came to value the limitless
research potential of post-secondary institutions. With the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957, research universities gained even greater prominence, as federal funds flowed freely in an effort to improve America’s technological and cultural competitiveness (Freeland, 2007).

Though Cold War conflict sustained the social contract through the 1950s and early 1960s, America’s involvement in Vietnam radically altered this symbiotic relationship. As the Baby Boomer generation supplanted WWII veterans at the nation’s colleges and universities, military and domestic affairs converged to create a new paradigm for American higher education (Geiger, 2005). Influenced by televised footage of the Vietnamese conflict, college students came to connect the oppression of peoples of color abroad with the injustices perpetrated against African Americans at home (Cohen, 1998). Reinvigorating the long-simmering civil rights movement, college students of all races and creeds protested institutional racism through sit-ins, campus protests, and counter-cultural expression (Geiger, 2005). Moreover, progressive academics and like-minded students began to demand a more diverse curriculum, forging new disciplinary offerings in African American, Asian, Chicano, and Women’s studies (Crowley, 1999; Trombley, 1970). Though these demonstrations succeeded in widening the scope of academia, they failed to engender widespread support amongst the American establishment (Lazerson, 2007). Indeed, politicians and the public at large soured on their commitment to higher education, believing it to be a hotbed for radical, anti-government expression. This disconnect disproportionately affected certain areas of the liberal arts—such as history and American studies—while leaving pre-professional and professional disciplines—such as business and engineering—relatively unscathed.
With the passing of this watershed moment, the federal government recast higher education as a private, economic benefit as opposed to a public, societal good. In tandem with the Reagan revolution of the 1980s, institutions of higher education came to espouse a more market-oriented philosophy, emphasizing research productivity, revenue generation, and graduate earnings (Ginsberg, 2011; Holmwood & Bhambra, 2012; Zusman, 2005). In the public sector, in particular, precipitous declines in state appropriations jeopardized the traditional liberal arts and non-scientific specialty programs, as these units often failed to conform to free market indicators (Trow, 2010). As illustrated by Slaughter (1993) and Brint, Turk-Bicakci, and Levy (2005), academic retrenchment became the preferred vehicle for the downsizing of academe, as higher education turned away from the liberal arts towards vocational, revenue-generating degree offerings.

In the 1990s, the struggle between market alignment and educational altruism reached its tipping point, as several anecdotal accounts of departmental and programmatic eliminations surfaced in the academic literature. Underscoring the vulnerability of the liberal art and social scientific disciplines, authors Crano (1995), Fedler, Carey, and Counts (1998), Reinardy and Halter (1994), and Seiler (1995) published cautionary tales of selective attrition in higher education. Indeed, as economic recession prompted declines in state revenue, the leadership in these post-secondary institutions turned to degree elimination as a means of meeting budget reduction targets. Amid discussions of research productivity and external funding streams, disciplines with lower-than-average levels of production became easy targets for eradication (Crano, 1995; Fedler et al., 1998; Reinardy & Halter, 1994; Seiler, 1995).
As a function of the post-September 11th economic recession, the aforementioned trends have only intensified, engendering a new financial paradigm in American higher education. Forced to contend with diminished coffers and increased demand for services, state governments across the country have radically altered their funding priorities, leading to diminished resources for public higher education (Fethke & Policano, 2012; Layzell, 2007). A discretionary item on a budget ledger, higher education often functions as a “balance wheel,” receiving disproportionate increases during a flush economy, and disproportionate decreases during an economic recession (Hovey, 1999). With its ability to generate income via tuition revenue, higher education finds itself in a unique position relative to other state funding priorities.

In this manner, state governments devote roughly 60% of their budgets to K-12 education, Medicaid, and corrections—services which have no financial failsafe (Layzell, 2007). When compounded by swelling elderly and school-aged populations, states have little choice but to allocate their limited resources to compulsory programs and social services which benefit the greatest proportion of the residential population (Cheslock & Hughes, 2011). Forced to contend with diminished legislative allocations, public post-secondary institutions have accelerated their search for external funding streams. While this entrepreneurial orientation undoubtedly benefits STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines, education, liberal arts, and the social sciences are not as closely aligned with this commercial facet of academe (Zusman, 2005). In his classic case study of department eliminations at four Carnegie-classified research institutions, Eckel (2003) elaborated on this very point, noting that liberal arts, education, and communications disciplines were disproportionate targets for academic attrition.
Highlighting the importance of “campus power circles” (p.114) in brokering department elimination decisions, Eckel (2003) underscores individual discourse as a critical component of the larger decision-making process.

Provided this overarching environment, I now turn to the human element of departmental/programmatic eliminations. In the context of the current study, department chairs and faculty members are the individuals most affected by academic attrition, due to their jeopardized livelihood as educational professionals. As such, it is imperative to discuss department chair roles and the department chair/faculty relationship, as they pertain to this phenomenon. Likened to the Roman god, Janus, “with faces oriented in opposite directions,” (Gmelch & Burns, 1993, p.260) academic department chairs must balance the many stresses associated with the duality of this position. As an administrator with a faculty members’ perspective, department chairs must attend to the bureaucratic aspects of leadership, as well as nurture the professional growth of the faculty members within their unit (Hendel & Horn, 2008).

Placed in this exceedingly difficult position, department chairs must effectively assume a variety of role orientations in order to engage in successful management of an academic unit (Tucker, 1993). While it is impossible to delineate the exhaustive responsibilities of an academic department chair, several scholars (Carroll & Gmelch, 1992; Leaming, 2007; Lees, 2006; Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999) agree that communication, resource management, and faculty development are significant duties of any department chair. Taking a holistic approach to the position, Berdrow (2010) discovered a significant “disconnect between stakeholder views of the DC role” (p.508). While department chairs focused the majority of their energies addressing daily
administrative tasks and faculty needs, stakeholders voiced varied opinions on where
department chairs should devote the bulk of their time, demonstrating a lack of
institutional understanding as to the nature of the position.

In this regard, as the “king among kings,” (Berdrow, 2010, p.508), the department
chair’s rapport with his/her faculty colleagues is among the most crucial of all academic
interactions. During times of retrenchment, in particular, department chairs bear
responsibility for navigating this murky academic terrain and motivating their faculty to
press forward in the midst of job-related uncertainty (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, &
Callan, 2004; Wheeler, 2007). Provided these less-than-ideal circumstances, department
chairs must work doubly hard to create a coherent faculty unit (Tierney, 1997), forge a
positive working environment (Lindholm, 2003; Zorn & Boler, 2007), and protect faculty
identity (Hakala, 2008). Indeed, the leadership and cohesion of an academic unit are
critical components of any effort to counteract departmental and/or programmatic
elimination proceedings—an under-researched phenomenon in American higher
education (Eckel, 2003).

**Conceptual Framework**

The changing historical and financial landscape of public post-secondary
education has and will continue to affect individual department chairs and faculty
members across American higher education. A complex and convoluted process, the
elimination of a department and/or program is a highly emotional occurrence plagued by
various iterations of uncertainty (Department Chair X, personal communication, April 7,
2011). As such, this study employs uncertainty reduction theory (Bordia et al., 2004) as a
guiding theoretical framework.
An adaptation of Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) seminal work, Bordia et al. (2004) posit three iterations of uncertainty during organizational change: strategic, structural, and job-related. In this regard, strategic uncertainty refers to uncertainty regarding organization-level issues, such as reasons for change, planning and future direction of the organization, its sustainability, the nature of the business environment the organization will face, and so forth. Further, structural uncertainty refers to uncertainty arising from changes to the inner workings of the organization, such as reporting structures and functions of different work units. Finally, job-related uncertainty refers to uncertainty regarding job security, promotion opportunities, changes to the job role, and so forth. Tested via a Likert-type survey, the combinations of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties informed individuals’ appraisal of organizational change. For the purposes of the present study, the findings elicited by the Bordia et al. (2004) conceptual framework warrant further application. Indeed, the similarities in organizational type (state government organization), unit of analysis (the individual), and organizational context (change) identify this study as a viable candidate for transference to qualitative methodology.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore department chair and faculty perceptions of implementing a departmental or programmatic elimination. Specifically, this study addressed the extent to which strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties prevail during a departmental or programmatic elimination. This study took place at a public, research intensive institution located in the western region of the United States (hereafter referred to as Mountain University), and focused on the events leading
up to and including the implementation of the state’s 2011-2013 legislative appropriation for higher education.

**Research Design**

As the purpose of this dissertation is to explore individual, lived experiences, I selected a qualitative research design to accomplish this objective. In accordance with Merriams’s (1998) case study protocol, the intent of this inquiry is to gain and “in-depth understanding…of a single unit or bounded system” (p.19). In this multiple, embedded case study, the bounded systems were four academic departments impacted by departmental or programmatic eliminations at Mountain University during the 2011-2013 biennial budgetary cycle. In an effort to illuminate this broader construct, I examined four instrumental iterations (Creswell, 2007) of a departmental/programmatic elimination: two units slated for elimination but ultimately saved, and two units eliminated outright. Within these iterations, I interviewed the department chair and two faculty members, in an effort to understand the resultant individual experiences characteristic of these three unique outcomes.

Moreover, the rationale for selecting Mountain University for this case study was directly attributable to the institution’s fiscal predicament as a public institution. Forced to contend with an overall decline in state revenue, the Mountain State legislature significantly reduced appropriations to Mountain University during the 2011-2013 budgetary biennium (Lake, February 16, 2011). As a means of meeting the reduction targets mandated by the Mountain State legislature, Mountain University elected to eliminate selected academic departments and programmatic units. Based upon the qualitative concept of purposive sampling (Bernard & Ryan, 2010), department chairs
and faculty members in these units represented the individuals qualified to participate in this study. All eligible department chairs received a physical letter of contact inviting them to participate in this study. The willingness of the department chair to participate in this study determined which units were ultimately selected for inclusion. Faculty in units with participating department chairs were then contacted for inclusion in this study.

In accordance with case study protocol, I included multiple sources of information and employed several analytic methodologies throughout this dissertation. Though semi-structured interviews formed the foundation of this study, I supplemented these narrative accounts with observations, public records, and personal documents (Merriam, 1998). Aided by the qualitative software package of ATLAS.ti, I constructed codes, categories, and themes using a variety of methodological techniques (Lewins & Silver, 2004). Guided by uncertainty reduction theory (Bordia et al., 2004), I employed constant comparison and analytic induction in an effort to explicate the essence of the narrators’ lived experiences. Within-case analysis and cross-case analysis ensued upon completion of data collection, resulting in a comprehensive narrative account of the departmental/programmatic elimination process at Mountain University (Merriam, 2009).

**Research Questions**

Upon review of the relevant literature, it became apparent that the departmental and programmatic elimination process is an under-researched topic of inquiry. In an effort to remedy this oversight, I aimed to address the following research questions during the course of this study:

1. How do individuals experience a potential departmental/programmatic elimination?
2. To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations?

3. How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties?

4. How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units?

These research questions flow from the conceptual framework of uncertainty reduction theory, highlighting the complex interaction between faculty members and department chairs during a departmental/programmatic elimination.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following definitions are provided to clarify the terms used throughout this study:

*Academic Department*: The strategic unit within colleges and universities in which faculty and department chairs serve the constituents of the department and where faculty fulfill their teaching and research interests (Leaming, 2007).

*Academic Program*: A cohesive arrangement of college level credit courses and experiences designed to accomplish predetermined objectives leading to the awarding of a degree, diploma, or certificate (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2009).

*Across-the-Board (Horizontal) Cut Backs*: The most frequently used institutional cost-saving strategy; these approaches are not concerned with intentionally changing the ways in which the organization interacts with its environment (Eckel, 2003).

*Department Chair*: The official designated leader of an academic department in a college or university (Leaming, 2007).
Financial exigency: An imminent financial crisis that threatens the survival of the institution as a whole and that cannot be alleviated by less drastic means (AAUP, 2009).

Job-related uncertainty: Uncertainty regarding job security, promotion opportunities, changes to the job role, and so forth (Bordia et al., 2004).

Latent content: The deep structural meaning conveyed by a message (Berg, 2007).

Manifest content: The surface structure present in a message (Berg, 2007).

Strategic uncertainty: Uncertainty regarding organization-level issues, such as reasons for change, planning and future direction of the organization, its sustainability, the nature of the business environment the organization will face, and so forth (Bordia et al., 2004).

Structural uncertainty: Uncertainty arising from changes to the inner workings of the organization, such as reporting structures and functions of different work units (Bordia et al., 2004).

Targeted (Vertical) Cutbacks: Institutional cost-saving strategy where particular units or programs face deeper reductions, or even elimination. These targeted cuts consist of an evaluation of one unit against others based upon criteria to maximize the organization-environment fit (Eckel, 2003).

Uncertainty: An individual’s inability to predict something accurately (Milliken, 1987).

Limitations

Limitations are a natural component of any research design; no study can encompass all aspects of a phenomenon in its entirety. As such, this study is limited by its institutional-level focus and small pool of potential participants. Furthermore, though
an abundance of official documentation exists in relation to the budgetary woes of Mountain University, it is wise to consider the sanitized nature of this form of communication. Formal accounts in administrative reports, newspaper interviews, and authorized meeting minutes may not truly reflect the highly contentious nature of university downsizing. With insufficient access to private correspondence and confidential communications, I readily acknowledge the limits of documental triangulation.

In addition to aforementioned constraints, it must be noted that all participants in this study were full-time, tenured faculty members gainfully employed at Mountain University. During departmental/programmatic elimination proceedings, non-tenured faculty and visiting professors are generally the first individuals to be terminated, as their contracts are not guaranteed beyond yearly appointments. Furthermore, the perceived instability of an institution embroiled in this type of organizational change often prompts tenured faculty to retire early or seek employment elsewhere, limiting the pool of potential participants. As such, the perspectives of the individuals highlighted in this study should be taken within this institutional context.

Moreover, facets of qualitative interview methodology place additional limitations on the findings of this study. Indeed, retrospective reflection on past events is limited by the narrator’s memory, his/her perceptive lens, and a natural inclination to present one’s self in the best possible light. Controversial actions and personal conversations relevant to the study may be purposefully withheld from the researcher, in order to protect the narrator and attendant institutional confidantes. Furthermore,
narrators may temper their responses for fear of institutional identification and retributive repercussions.

Additionally, as the conduit for data collection, the researcher brings her own inherent limitations to bear on this study. As the quality of dialogue is dependent upon the interviewer’s ability to provide appropriate prompts, probes, and directional guidance, my value as a researcher will hinge on the aforementioned standards. Moreover, the conversion of raw interview data into robust explanatory content is limited by my analytical ability to triangulate ideas, discern motivations, and analyze themes. Past experiences and integrated knowledge of the related literature may well introduce unforeseen biases; these can only be remedied by extensive explication by the researcher in areas appropriate for first-person commentary.

**Significance of the Study**

As a function of the current economic downturn, the concept of “budget cuts” is firmly entrenched in the public mind. However, abstract figures on institutional balance sheets do not adequately address the human toll of financial retrenchment. While declining state support for higher education is well documented from a quantitative standpoint, qualitative analyses are few and far between. Indeed, there is no available scholarship on the implementation of departmental or programmatic elimination directives. As such, the current study stands to fill a noticeable gap in university leadership literature. In addition to the numerous roles and responsibilities already assumed by department chairs and faculty members, it is increasingly evident that departmental and programmatic attrition has become a new facet of academic life. Given this burgeoning trend of academic downsizing, it is critical that those at the forefront of
this phenomenon have the ability to research and learn from the experiences of their colleagues.

Summary

This chapter provided a brief overview of the research topic and introduced the basic tenets of the study’s design. In an effort to explicate the phenomenon of academic attrition, the following sections were included in this chapter: a succinct summary of the relevant literature, an explanation of the study’s conceptual framework; the purpose of conducting the study; research questions; research design; definition of key terms; limitations; and significance of the study. The following chapter will provide a more comprehensive review of the related literature, with reference to the broader historical and financial context of the departmental/programmatic elimination movement in higher education. Through a more nuanced understanding of pertinent scholarship, uncertainty reduction theory will emerge as the intellectual scaffolding undergirding the present study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The contextual factors which influence departmental and programmatic eliminations are indeed numerous, and draw from a variety of disciplinary frameworks. An emergent paradigm in higher education, departmental/programmatic eliminations have forced academics to reconsider the multifarious purposes, priorities, and politics inherent in public university systems (Eckel, 2003). As such, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore department chair and faculty perceptions of implementing departmental and/or programmatic eliminations at one public, research extensive institution. Through this analysis of lived experience, it may be possible to contribute to a burgeoning body of practical scholarship on academic attrition. As such, this study aims to assist institutional stakeholders across the country who are struggling to understand this emergent phenomenon in higher education.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the pertinent scholarly research and theory on departmental and programmatic eliminations, department chair roles and responsibilities, and the relationship of the department chair to his or her faculty colleagues. The chapter begins with a chronological overview of academic expansion and attrition in American higher education, followed by a discussion on the external environmental factors impacting public post-secondary funding streams. Having addressed the historical and economic conditions undergirding this phenomenon, the second part of the literature review focuses on the human element of department/program eliminations. Following this explication of department chair roles, responsibilities, and attendant faculty
relationships, the chapter concludes with a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

**Historical Background on Department/Program Eliminations**

The relationship between the federal government and American higher education is often characterized as a “social contract” (Perorazio, 2001). In this symbiotic exchange, public investment in post-secondary education resulted in a series of civic gains benefitting society at large. In addition to economic and cultural development, advances in education, technology, medicine, and modern science are all attributable to the strong linkages forged between higher education and the federal government (Perorazio, 2001). However, in the past thirty years, fissures in this seemingly unbreakable social contract have surfaced, resulting in a competitive disciplinary hierarchy in higher education (Geiger, 2005). Indeed, as the private economic benefits of post-secondary education supplanted the old paradigm of societal betterment, an individual’s return on investment came to dictate the relative worth of various departments and degree programs (Cohen, 1998). Reflecting on historical cross-currents from World War II to the present, it is apparent that cycles of departmental/programmatic growth and attrition in American higher education have occurred in concert with broader national developments.

**History of Higher Education 1945-1960s**

The immediate post-war period to the mid-1960s is often referred to as the “golden age” of American higher education (Freeland, 2007). Confronted with the possibility of civil unrest and rampant unemployment upon the return of tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers, the federal government drafted legislation designed to retool
these newly minted veterans of World War II (Thomas, 1997). The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (more commonly referred to as the GI Bill), underwrote the post-war higher education boom by providing a sizable financial incentive to enroll in a post-secondary institution. Covering tuition, books, and a housing stipend for full-time students based on years of military service, the GI Bill retrained soldiers for careers in the burgeoning post-war economy (Cohen, 1998).

Though the GI Bill did not restrict veterans as to discipline of study, a series of national events heightened the attractiveness of selected career paths. Indeed, just as the European combat phase was winding down, an ideological conflict erupted between the backers of American-style capitalism and those in favor of Soviet communism (Lazerson, 2007). Winning this quasi-military conflict, known as the Cold War, became the top priority of the federal government, resulting in significant ramifications for higher education (Geiger, 2005). Following the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik in 1957, the Eisenhower administration took decisive action to improve America’s technological and cultural competitiveness (Freeland, 2007). In August 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, providing additional federal grant aid to students studying foreign languages, science, mathematics, engineering, and the new educational technologies of television and radio (Furman, 1958).

As higher education became inexorably intertwined with national security, federal funding flowed freely to sustain and strengthen this mutually beneficial enterprise. In tandem with the Sputnik scare of 1957, President Eisenhower’s Committee on Education Beyond the High School published a report detailing the alarming shortage of Ph.D.’s in higher education (Freeland, 2007). With demand for doctorates outpacing supply,
graduate programs and faculty salaries grew exponentially, elevating the status of academia to previously unforeseen heights (Freeland, 2007). As competition for federal research dollars accelerated, institutions devised generous compensation packages to attract top scholars in a variety of disciplines (Geiger, 2005). Through the creation and generous funding of several agencies in the 1950s and 1960s, most notably the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautical and Space Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the federal government institutionalized a national infrastructure to support scholarly achievement in higher education (Geiger, 2005). Devised out of economic necessity and sustained by synergetic purpose, this reciprocal relationship insured a booming American economy and laid the foundation for a superior system of higher education. However, as national interests turned to a new foreign conflict and social issues took center stage on American campuses, this seemingly unbreakable bond began to unravel, forever altering public perception of the social contract.

**History of Higher Education 1960s-1970s**

As the Baby Boomer generation supplanted WWII veterans at the nation’s colleges and universities, military and domestic affairs converged to create powder keg conditions for American higher education. With the century’s largest eighteen-to-twenty-one-year-old age cohort (Geiger, 2005) occupying the hallowed halls of academe, changing political headwinds threatened to disrupt this extended period of postwar prosperity. Under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, escalating combat operations in Vietnam eventually turned a cold war of words into a full-blown military engagement (Cohen, 1998). As advances in information technology beamed horrific
wartime footage to television sets across the country, college students came to connect the oppression of peoples of color abroad with the injustices perpetrated against African Americans at home (Cohen, 1998).

Reinvigorating the long-simmering civil rights movement, college students of all races and creeds protested institutional racism through sit-ins, campus protests, and counter-cultural expression (Geiger, 2005). Within the ivory tower, progressive academics and like-minded students questioned an outmoded curriculum founded on the preeminence of Western civilization. Reflecting on this curricular change, higher education historian Roger Geiger (2005) made the following observation:

One clarion call of the student rebellion was for relevance in university studies. Relevance indeed became a hallmark of the new era but in ways not anticipated by student activists. They had advocated a tendentious relevance predicated on the university’s role as an aloof critic of society. Thus, they urged universities to study and seek to ameliorate problems stemming from the Vietnam War, racial inequality, poverty, and the environment. These topics long remained preoccupations on campuses, but more powerful trends toward relevance were welling up. Students sought a more tangible form of relevance by turning away from the arts and sciences and toward more vocational or professional majors (p.65).

Indeed, just as departments of African American, Asian, Chicano, and Women’s studies emerged on the academic landscape, (Crowley, 1999; Trombley, 1970) flagging student interest caused degree production in the liberal arts disciplines to decline from a high of 47% in the heyday of the 1960s to just over 25% in the 1970s (Geiger, 2005). Moreover, the “demonstrations, strikes, and violence during the 1960s and early 1970s divided higher education from within and diminished enthusiasm for it among politicians and the public at large as they questioned whether higher education had become yet another mistaken entitlement of the welfare state” (Lazerson, 2007, p. 794). Undeniably broken,
the sacrosanct social contract shifted from public societal good to private economic benefit with the passing of this watershed moment in American higher education.

**History of Higher Education 1980s**

In sharp contrast to the rapid expansion of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s, a new conservatism accompanied the Reagan revolution of the 1980s (Geiger, 2005). This powerful political paradigm pervaded the nation, redefining the discourse on public-private enterprise. In this manner, the private economic benefits of post-secondary attainment slowly superseded the social democratic function of higher education. As a function of this decisive shift, institutions of higher education came to espouse a more market-oriented philosophy, emphasizing research productivity, revenue generation, and graduate earnings (Zusman, 2005). In the public sector, in particular, precipitous declines in state appropriations jeopardized the traditional liberal arts and non-scientific specialty programs, as these units often failed to conform to free market indicators (Trow, 2010).

In one of the first articles to address this phenomenon, Slaughter (1993) analyzed seventeen faculty dismissal cases reported by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in *Academe* from 1980-1990. Dealing specifically with downsizing, financial exigency, and programmatic reduction, this case study provided an enlightening overview of the burgeoning retrenchment phenomenon in higher education. Utilizing critical feminist and neo-Marxian theories to guide her study, Slaughter (1993) situated her findings in larger political, economic, and patriarchal discourses. Linking abrogation of tenure to the recession of 1983 and the conservatism of the Reagan/Bush eras, Slaughter (1993) examined the restructuring of professional labor, the managerial
practice of retrenchment, and faculty response to downsizing, drawing conclusions as to the identifiable patterns in all seventeen cases.

Slaughter’s (1993) findings indicated that state budgetary shortfalls and property tax limitations often precipitated programmatic reductions, and that these “intimations of financial crisis consolidated power and authority in institutional administrations” (p.260). Moreover, this concentration of influence allowed administrators to fundamentally restructure higher education under the guise of retrenchment. Breaking down the seventeen AAUP cases by field, Slaughter (1993) discovered that “72.9 percent of the firings occurred in the social sciences, liberal arts, and education,” (p.270) disproportionately impacting female faculty and the female students who gravitated toward those disciplines. Furthermore, “faculty who were not retrenched (science, engineering, medicine, business, law) were generally in fields close to major mission agencies, had powerful external constituencies, and were routes to highly paid careers that enabled graduates to donate monies to colleges and universities” (p.273). Lending credence to Slaughter’s (1993) prescient discovery, authors Brint, Turk-Bicakci, and Levy (2005) drew similar conclusions when analyzing the decline of the liberal arts in American higher education. Expounding on this phenomenon, Brint et al. (2005) concluded:

The smaller arts and sciences disciplines, particularly area studies and foreign languages and literatures, have faced significant downsizing and even elimination, while interdisciplinary majors in the arts and sciences have grown more popular among administrators, sometimes as much for economic as for intellectual reasons (p.172)

Provided the larger economic and political pressures to conform to the free market, it is small wonder that higher education turned away from the liberal arts towards vocational,
revenue-generating degree offerings in this business-oriented decade. In the coming years, state fiscal crises would accelerate this trend, solidifying the academic preeminence of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) disciplines (Brint, Proctor, Murphy, & Hanneman, 2012).

**History of Higher Education 1990s-Present**

Moving into the 1990s, it is clear that market factors continued to shape the academic landscape. In this manner, several authors (Crano, 1995; Fedler et al., 1998; Reinardy & Halter, 1994; Seiler, 1995) provided anecdotal evidence of departmental elimination battles in vulnerable liberal art and social scientific fields. Just as the recession of 1983 precipitated many of the AAUP cases in Slaughter’s (1993) study, economic downturns in the 1990s placed faculty in social work (Reinardy & Halter, 1994), communication studies (Crano, 1995; Seiler, 1995) and journalism (Fedler et al., 1998) in the unenviable positions of having to defend their respective disciplinary merits. Indeed, discussions of research productivity (Fedler et al., 1998), external funding (Crano, 1995; Seiler, 1995), and a disproportionate impact on women (Reinardy & Halter, 1994) pervade this literature, lending credence to Slaughter’s (1993) predictive prowess.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the sporadic literature on programmatic reduction reached its tipping point, culminating in Eckel’s (2003) case study of four Carnegie classified research universities. Using a multi-lens organizational framework to study institutional structure, human resources, politics, and symbolism, Eckel (2003) examined the process, effects, and common themes of program discontinuance. Like the aforementioned studies, Eckel’s (2003) institutions were forced
to contend with declining state-level resources, thus prompting the discussions of program closure. In the tradition of Slaughter (1993), Eckel (2003) analyzed suspected reasons for program discontinuance, delving deep into the institutions’ culture via multiple stakeholder interviews and pertinent document analysis. Moreover, Eckel (2003) juxtaposed stated elimination criteria with suspected termination rules, revealing a stark dichotomy between official communications and stakeholder messages.

Though mission centrality, quality, cost, and demand permeated the official discourse on program discontinuance, this ostensible display of shared governance was undercut by mitigating intra-institutional factors. Referencing the units targeted for elimination, overwhelmingly liberal arts, education, and communications disciplines, Eckel (2003) made the following observation:

The administrative leaders at these four institutions additionally worked to make politically defensible decisions…The closed programs at all four campuses tended to have low numbers of faculty, students, and alumni. The units did not have champions on or off campus willing to take up their cause. Departmental leadership tended to be novice or ineffectual; their alumni small or dispersed; and their faculty disconnected from campus power circles. (p.114).

Eckel’s (2003) commentary underscores the internal politics and dearth of data-driven decision-making during the programmatic elimination process. Unfortunately, recent scholarship (Reed, Cooper, & Young, 2007) and spate of articles published by the Chronicle of Higher Education (Carlson, 2011; Glenn, 2008; Wasley, 2008; Wilson, 2009), largely confirms the aforementioned trends. Forced to contend with declining state revenues, public institutions of higher education are cutting departments, programs, (Carlson, 2011; Glenn, 2008; Reed et al., 2007; Wasley, 2008) faculty, (Wilson, 2009) and staff (Rosser, 2012) in earnest in order to compensate for unprecedented, state-level budget reductions.
Concluding Remarks on the History of Department/Program Eliminations

Though the social contract remains a powerful ideal in American higher education, it is evident that conditions facilitating this once strong linkage have since dissolved. While diverse scholarly productivity propelled the United States to economic and cultural supremacy post-World War II, the perception of college campuses as hotbeds of anti-government radicalism heralded the decline of this fortuitous union (Cohen, 1998). As public perception shifted from admiration to suspicion, higher education eventually became a means to an end, thus supplanting the fundamental intellectual journey (Lazerson, 2007). With limited high-paying job opportunities, students rebuffed the liberal arts, education, and communication disciplines in favor of lucrative careers in STEM-oriented fields (Geiger, 2005). Prompted by state fiscal crises, higher education administrators acceded to this trend, eliminating departments and programs which did not have lucrative research potential, wealthy alumni, or powerful external constituencies (Eckel, 2003). As a result of these changing political, economic, and social circumstances, an unspoken disciplinary hierarchy now permeates American higher education, jeopardizing the long-term legitimacy of general knowledge degree programs.

Financial Background on Department/Program Eliminations

Though academic publications often distinguish between “public” and “private” higher education, the increasing financial similarity between these two categories of institutions is certainly cause for public concern. Buoyed by state subsidies, public universities provide their services at a significant discount to consumers, underscoring the assertion that an educated citizenry is a significant state-wide asset. However, long-term
fiscal trends, exacerbated by economic recessions, point to “an increasing privatization of higher education” (Massy, 2001, p. 458). Forced to compete with other civic priorities for scarce shares of state revenue, public higher education has become progressively tuition-dependent as a substitute for shrinking state appropriations (Delta Cost Project, 2009). In the state of Nevada, where structural deficits and inelastic revenue streams dominate the fiscal landscape (Hovey, 1999), the most recent financial downturn has aggravated these long-simmering national trends, resulting in the elimination of entire departments and programs from its university system (Lake, 2011). Through the examination of macro-level financial indicators in public higher education, it is apparent that substituting tuition for state subsidy has and will continue to transform a not-for-profit entity into a profit-conscious enterprise.

**State Funding Priorities**

In order to comprehend the financial predicament facing public higher education more fully, it is important to understand the relative distribution of state funding preferences. Ranking atop the priority list are federally mandated expenditures on compulsory education and low-income health care, comprising 40-50% of state budgetary outlays (Zusman, 2005). As several authors have noted (Cheslock & Hughes, 2011; Ehrenberg, 2006; Hauptman, 2001; Jones, 2009; Layzell, 2007; McGuinness Jr., 2005; Reindl & Reyna, 2011), K-12 and Medicaid spending will only increase in the coming decades, as a result of demographic and economic trends.

Elaborating on this financial forecast, policy analyst Harold Hovey (1999) points to the growth in school-aged and elderly populations as catalysts for state spending decisions. As K-12 enrollments swell, the budget for this area must rise accordingly, as a
means of accommodating additional construction, maintenance, and instructional expenditures. While it is certainly within the purview of state decision-makers to refuse to fund these additional expenditures, cutting compulsory education is a politically unpopular option. The combined force of teachers, parents, and school board members represents a powerful ideological constituency—and a voting bloc able to make or break a political candidacy (Hovey, 1999).

In much the same manner as the K-12 community, senior citizens have become an influential interest group in American politics. With the eminent retirement of the Baby Boom generation on the horizon, the needs of the elderly will indeed become a driving force in the state budgetary process. With savings accounts and retirement plans decimated by the most recent recession (SHEEO, 2011), increasing numbers of senior citizens have met the means-test for Medicaid eligibility (Hovey, 1999). Moreover, as health care and nursing home costs escalate, the percentage of state expenditures dedicated to Medicaid will assuredly continue to climb (Layzell, 2007).

Though corrections’ spending is not tied to federal mandates, multitudinous factors contribute to its prominence on the state balance ledger. First and foremost, being “tough on crime,” is a winning political posture, and enactment of strict sentencing laws constitutes a campaign promise fulfilled. Furthermore, popular “Three Strikes and You’re Out” bills have contributed to lengthened and longer-served sentences, driving operating costs upward (Cohen, 1998). As a function of these punitive policies, the number of inmates in state correctional facilities has increased annually by 5% since the early 1990s (Hovey, 1999). With scores of new prisoners to house, feed, and otherwise
maintain, it is no wonder that prison construction, staffing, and upkeep are outpacing state funding for higher education (Okunade, 2004).

With roughly 60% of a state’s budget expended on K-12, Medicaid, and corrections alone, it is evident that higher education is competing for a shrinking slice of the state revenue pie. Considered a discretionary expenditure, higher education represented approximately 11.8% of general fund spending in fiscal year 2005 (Layzell, 2007). However, these pre-recession figures do not account for the dramatic declines in state revenue since 2008 (SHEEO, 2011). As articulated by Hovey (1999), higher education’s funding levels are closely tied to the overall economic health of the nation. Therefore, in a strong economy, higher education typically receives a substantial appropriation relative to other state services. Conversely, during tough fiscal times, higher education bears a larger brunt of the shared financial sacrifice. In this manner, fluctuations in spending levels “stem from the use of higher education as a balance wheel in state finance” (Hovey, 1999, p.19). Unwilling and unable to rely on an unstable revenue stream, public institutions of higher education have increased their revenue-generating capacity to account for these significant declines in state appropriations. Furthermore, as states struggle to close major budget deficits, financial necessity will force higher education institutions to hasten these alternative fundraising efforts (Cheslock & Hughes, 2011).

**Institutional Revenue Sources**

In order to understand how reductions in state appropriations have impacted public universities, it is imperative to examine the historical origins of higher education revenue. In 1975-1976, the four largest revenue sources were state government (31%),
tuition and fees (21%), sales and services (19%), and the federal government (16%).

Twenty years later, in 1994-1995, these revenue sources reflected the following distributions: tuition and fees (27%), sales and services (23%), state government (23%), and the federal government (12%) (Cohen, 1998). Between 1995 and 2006, the shift from state subsidy to private burden became even more pronounced, as “the dominant revenue pattern across public institutions was the growing dependence on tuitions as a primary source of revenue” (Delta Cost Project, 2009, p.13). Some states, such as Florida, have decided that tuition differentials that once allowed for enhanced academic programs should instead supplant funds diverted from universities due to budgetary shortfalls, tax cuts, or other incentives that place a growing burden on students. In 1990, state funding covered seventy-one percent of the costs to educate students in Florida’s public universities; twenty years later, that percentage dipped to forty-nine percent while students shouldered the burden through tuition increases (USF Oracle Editorial Opinion, 2012).

In tandem with this escalating reliance on tuition revenue, public post-secondary institutions are becoming more entrepreneurial in their quest to generate funds from individual donors and private industry. As noted by Hauptman (2001), “fundraising is increasingly part of the responsibilities of public sector officials,” as indicated by the “growth of foundations at public colleges and universities” (p.119). In addition to more frequent and aggressive capital campaigns, public institutions have become reliant upon sponsored research as a substitute for state revenue (Massy, 2001). Driven to increase their proportion of extramural funds, state universities have made substantial investments in elaborate research parks in the hopes of attracting private corporations to campus
(Cohen, 1998). Though many perceive this enterprising behavior as a positive means of financial adjustment, the pressure to generate alternative revenue has recalibrated the public mission of state institutions. Forced to behave like a business, the priorities of public higher education have shifted accordingly.

**Institutional Funding Priorities**

In the new paradigm of higher education finance, public institutions will disproportionately allocate scarce resources to activities that will generate the greatest perceived return on investment. As indicated by the Delta Cost Project (2009), an independent non-profit organization which tracks trends in college spending, expenditures per student on instruction declined between 2002 and 2005 at public institutions. Provided that classroom teaching does not produce revenue, and in fact detracts from instructors’ ability to conduct lucrative research, this downturn in instructional allocations is unsurprising (Ginsberg, 2011). As a result of this shift in institutional policy, undergraduate time-to-degree at public institutions has lengthened considerably, with students requiring an average of 5-6 years to complete a traditional four-year degree (Hauptman, 2001).

While these overall decreases in instructional expenditures are common knowledge within the higher education community, the patterns of decline amongst specific academic disciplines are not nearly as prominent. Indeed, academic attrition does not affect all departments and degree programs equally, as instructional allocations generally follow the fiscal principles previously discussed. As noted by Zusman (2005):

…fields unable to tie themselves to market needs may be disproportionately cut. Over the next decade, humanities and social science programs may be at risk if institutions implement budget systems that require departments to generate income equal to their costs (p.122).
In times of economic downturn, especially, entrepreneurial executives may move aggressively in this direction under the guise of financial necessity. According to Massy (2001):

Administrators may harbor secret lists of programs that have outlived their usefulness, but which would be politically difficult to close in normal circumstances. A budget-cutting climate offers the opportunity to move against these “targets of opportunity,” usually in the context of speeches about “making hard choices” (p.450).

Unfortunately, these “hard choices” have come to redefine the academic landscape, privileging market-oriented disciplines over less lucrative general knowledge and liberal arts fields.

**Concluding Remarks on Financial Aspects of Department/Program Eliminations**

Though substituting alternative revenue sources for state subsidy has temporarily stabilized higher education finance, it is evident that the long-term consequences of this shift significantly outweigh the short-term benefits. Indeed, as the fiscal foundation of state appropriations continues to erode, public institutions have less incentive to offer services aimed at altruistic ends. As a tone of “let those who use it pay for it” (Cohen, 1998, p.453) pervades higher education, financial demands will place mounting pressure on institutions to offer degree programs in line with this economic theory. As posited by Massy (2001), the answers to two critical questions shall define the course of higher education in the twenty-first century:

How will market forces affect that most fundamental objective of the classic university—to nurture the community of scholars that since ancient times has conserved and advanced mankind’s intellectual and cultural heritage? Under what conditions will academic institutions be able to defend intellectual autonomy in the face of privatization? (p.460).

Absent a renewed commitment to state subsidies to higher education, the comeback to this call to action may not measure up to the desired response. By removing the “public”
from public higher education, heightened tuition rates pale in comparison to the broader intellectual repercussions on the imminent horizon.

**Department Chair Roles/Responsibilities**

Torn between the various responsibilities of faculty life and administrative protocol, the position of academic department chair encompasses a plethora of related roles and responsibilities. Likened to the Roman god, Janus, “with faces oriented in opposite directions,” (Gmelch & Burns, 1993, p.260), academic department chairs must balance the stresses associated with the duality of this position. Indeed, in a survey of department chairs at 101 research and doctorate-granting institutions, Gmelch and Burns (1993) found that an unmanageable workload ranked first in an analysis of serious stressors affecting workplace productivity. In a more recent survey, Hendel and Horn (2008) discovered an empirical link between workload overload, role conflict, and employment at a public higher education institution. Furthermore, this conflict is exacerbated by a lack of training programs (Friel, 2010; Wolverton & Ackerman, 2006) designed to ensure a smooth transition to this hybrid position.

Provided the aforementioned parameters, it is important to outline the vast and varied tasks associated with the department chair position. An under-researched segment of scholarship, Tucker (1993) elevated the profile of department chairs by delineating fifty-four discrete responsibilities associated with the position. Encompassing governance, instruction, faculty affairs, student affairs, communication, budget and resource allocation, office management, and professional development, Tucker’s (1993) research illuminated the need for further empirical investigation. Tucker’s contemporaries, Carroll and Gmelch (1992), complemented this field of study through
factor analysis, discovering four typologies associated with effective chairperson performance. Based upon a survey of one hundred department chairs at Carnegie classified research and doctorate granting institutions, Carroll and Gmelch (1992) identified leader-chairs, scholar-chairs, faculty developer-chairs, and manager-chairs, associating task competencies with the respective positions. Far from a sinecure, leadership at the departmental level necessitates knowledge of administrative organization, resource management, faculty development, and effective cooperation (Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999).

In more recent years, as a function of economic circumstance and stakeholder expansion, the communicative aspects of the department chair position (Leaming, 2007; Lees, 2006) have gained prominence. Indeed, as the public financial commitment to higher education continues to decline (Hovey, 1999) and institutional budgets accordingly constrict, chairs have had to become deft in the art of departmental advocacy (Eckel, 2003). Expounding on this burgeoning trend, Lees (2006) underscores the relationship between resource allocation and effective academic leadership, noting:

In some cases, programs may be eliminated. Such programs would likely be identified by a cost analysis indicating that they cost far more than they generate and by an academic analysis indicating that they are not likely to produce degrees that will be in high demand. Chairs will play a critical role in articulating the interrelationships among programs so that, if necessary, such reductions happen in ways that allow the institution to emerge stronger (p.251).

In addition to working within the familiar landscape of academe, department chairs must increasingly communicate with external constituents, including alumni, legislators, the news media, and the general public, as a means of promoting the department’s contributions to the community (Leaming, 2007). Indeed, the complexity of managing a
contemporary academic department has even prompted the emergence of discipline-specific scholarship (Aggarwal, Rochford, & Vaidyanathan, 2009).

Exemplifying a recent scholarly turn, Berdrow (2010) rejects the study of the department chair in isolation in favor of a more nuanced understanding of the department chair’s place in the larger academic hierarchy. Taking a 360º approach to the position, Berdrow (2010) examines “the role of the department chair by analyzing it in the context of the institution’s goals and expectations, the stakeholders affecting and affected by the department chair, and the chair’s own capabilities” (p.499). Harnessing theories of managerial human capital, managerial social capital, managerial cognition, organizational complexity, and role socialization to frame her study, Berdrow (2010) conducted interviews and focus groups with current liberal arts and business department chairs, former department chairs, and institutional stakeholders at a private business university in the Northeastern United States.

As a consequence of this study, Berdrow (2010) categorized department chair roles as either managerial (faculty development, student development, communication and representation, and operations and administration) or transformational (catalyst/innovation and climate enhancement). Moreover, in addition to the myriad demands encompassed in these six designations, Berdrow (2010) discovered a significant “disconnect between stakeholder views of the DC role” (p.508). While department chairs focused the majority of their energies on daily administrative and climate maintenance functions, stakeholders voiced varied opinions on where department chairs should devote the bulk of their time, demonstrating a lack of institutional understanding as to the nature of this position. While Berdrow’s (2010) study of a single, private institution limits the
transferability of these findings, the scarce scholarship on department chairs supports a broader incidence of department chair role ambiguity across academia.

**The Department Chair/Faculty Relationship**

The effectiveness of an academic department chair is often dependent upon the successful cultivation of interpersonal relationships (Moye, Henkin, & Floyd, 2006). As the “king among kings,” (Berdrow, 2010, p.508) the department chair’s rapport with his/her faculty colleagues is among the most crucial of all academic interactions. Under the auspices of servant leadership, department chairs bear responsibility for establishing a positive working environment, empowering faculty members, and ensuring equitable productivity (Wheeler, 2007). However, none of these objectives can be achieved in the absence of frequent and effective communication (Leaming, 2007).

In a classic and highly cited piece on organizational socialization, Tierney (1997) argued that the enculturation of faculty is of critical importance to academic administrators. Applying dueling modernist/postmodernist perspectives as a theoretical framework, Tierney (1997) analyzed three hundred interviews of tenure-track faculty in eight four-year colleges and universities. Aggregating these responses into relevant themes and conceptual categories, Tierney (1997) proposed “a schema for how we might think about organizational socialization and how we might develop policies that contribute to the successful socialization of faculty into the academy” (p.2). In this manner, Tierney (1997) locates faculty socialization in the contestable culture of academic life, whereby individual faculty members alternatively contribute to and are influenced by the multifarious perspectives of other organizational colleagues.

Highlighting the importance of institutional context, Tierney (1997) underscores the
“cultural act” (p.6) of socialization, through which faculty mediate the significance of teaching, research, and service in their particular departments. Emphasizing the department chair as a principal mediator of cultural norms, Tierney (1997) stresses implicit expression as a crucial complement to explicitly communicated directives in the organizational socialization of academic faculty.

Building on Tierney’s (1997) seminal work, Trowler and Knight (2000) applied the concept of organizational socialization to an international context. In an effort to generate a grounded theory of this complex process, Trowler and Knight (2000) interviewed twenty-four new faculty members at ten Canadian and English universities, in order to discover ways in which to improve transition into the academic profession. Influenced by activity system theory, a conceptual framework rooted in the discipline of psychology, Trowler and Knight (2000) conclude that the “discourses and practices” (p.28) of a particular department is of paramount importance to a newly appointed faculty member. Highlighting communication, especially department chair communication, as “the key to the development of intersubjectivity,” (p.31), Trowler and Knight (2000) further refine this process as “provisional and influenced by power relations” (p.32). As such, activity systems, aka academic departments, are “highly permeable” (p.33) entities, greatly influenced by the “micro-politics” (p.33) of academic life. An individual faculty member’s “construction of personal and professional identity” (p.33) is therefore highly dependent upon the dynamic social interactions facilitated by the leadership, mentorship, and discursive style of the academic department chair.

Linking faculty work environment to perceived institutional “fit,” Lindholm (2003) locates organizational socialization as a primary influence on “the nature and
intensity of individual motivation” (p.126). In an effort to create “more socially responsive” institutions (p.126), Lindholm (2003) qualitatively examined faculty members’ perceptions of their institutional working environment. Using structural contingency theory as a conceptual framework, Lindholm (2003) conducted a case study of thirty-six tenure-track faculty in four departments at a public research university. Employing analytic induction, Lindholm (2003) noted the following: “for the vast majority [of faculty] the most salient layer in considering organizational fit issues is their disciplinary department” (p.133). Building on this foundational assessment, Lindholm (2003) uncovered the nexus among perceived institutional fit, individual motivation, and departmental leadership. Addressing this phenomenon, Lindholm (2003) commented: “Widely described as an “essential” factor in creating the structural conditions that maximize congruence between faculty members’ needs and departmental realities, the chair’s position was widely respected but rarely envied, given its “highly time-consuming” and “largely thankless” nature” (p.141). Thoroughly researched and convincingly presented, Lindholm’s (2003) study effectively demonstrates the substantial role of the department chair in maximizing the physical and emotional resources of a disciplinary unit.

Addressing this very issue, authors Norman, Ambrose, and Huston (2006) assessed faculty morale at a small, Research I university from 2002-2003. Using narrative theory to frame their study, Norman et al. (2006) conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with one hundred twenty-three current and former faculty members regarding work life satisfaction within their academic departments. They then hired a playwright to review these transcripts, remove identifiable data, and compose teachable
scenarios out of the composite narratives. These fictionalized accounts, encompassing issues of collegiality, leadership, mentoring, and promotion, were then presented to current faculty members by department chairs from other disciplines, which were trained as facilitators for the purposes of this study. As a result of opening this communicative avenue, Norman et al. (2006) discovered a cathartic avenue for both faculty members and faculty leadership, with one chair commenting “that he was becoming a better department head as a result of what he had learned” (p.362). While this study represents a unique experience at a single institution, the rich, thick description of events coupled with the inclusion of interview protocols and fictional scenarios, solidifies this study as an exemplary instance of qualitative research.

Observing the critical mass of literature on emotions and educational leadership, authors Zorn and Boler (2007) reviewed and analyzed the myriad publications pertaining to this topic. Arguing that “emotions need to be understood as publically and collaboratively formed”…and “leadership needs to be seen as an enacted, emergent phenomenon” (p.137), Zorn and Boler (2007) situate their findings in the broader realm of organizational theory. Emphasizing the importance of emotional understanding in educational leadership, Zorn and Boler (2007) make the following observation:

It is only by foregrounding relations of power that define emotional experience and communication that new research can resist the tendency to individualize or universalize emotional experiences. It is not enough that educational leaders show consideration for emotions and their social and organizational dimension. Within education, as in the wider culture, emotions are a site of control and a mode of political resistance (p.148)

As such, it is imperative that departmental leaders understand their role in mediating “the emotions that motivate a person to change and which also make change discomforting and something to be resisted” (Zorn & Boler, 2007, p.146). Indeed, in setting the tone of
organizational discourse, department chairs play a formative part in framing the social context of the departmental unit.

Connecting the increasingly entrepreneurial orientation of the modern research university to issues of academic motivation, Hakala’s (2008) study incorporates themes salient to the emergent topic of departmental and programmatic elimination. Though this particular study takes place in Finland, the qualitative construct of transferability (Merriam, 2009) invites parallels to similar cross-currents in American higher education. Like many capitalist countries, Finland’s system of higher education has struggled to balance “competition for external research funding, increased emphasis on efficiency and contributions to economic and social development” (Hakala, 2008, p.174). This powerful confluence has ushered in a new institutional paradigm, in which “the traditional framework for understanding academic work and identity is rendered invalid by the ongoing changes in academia” (Hakala, 2008, p.178). In an effort to explore the impact of this new academic model on the future academic workforce, Hakala (2008) interviewed a total of twelve Finnish Ph.D. students in four research-oriented disciplines as to their sources of intellectual motivation. Finding a fundamental shift in the scholarly profession, Hakala (2008) made the following determination: “The future academic is primarily an expert who is able to produce new knowledge across disciplinary boundaries and together with those who eventually use the knowledge” (p.177). Indeed, this international clarion call to practicality has considerable ramifications for organizational restructuring in American higher education. In a climate of diminished resources and heightened accountability, departmental leaders must secure the survival of their academic units by increasing their interdisciplinary orientation and partnering with key
stakeholders in the surrounding community. By confronting rather than avoiding academic uncertainty, departmental leaders have the ability to motivate their faculty to embrace new conceptualizations of scholarly organization.

**Conceptual Framework**

In an effort to explicate the aforementioned phenomenon, this study will employ the conceptual framework of uncertainty reduction theory (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004). A notable facet of organizational change, Milliken (1987) defines uncertainty as “an individual’s inability to predict something accurately” (p.136). As organizations respond to changes in both internal and external environments, uncertainty assumes a central role in the lives of organizational employees. In the bureaucratic context of a public university, where process, paperwork, and procedure define the work lives of employees, a new and as yet unregulated undertaking can cause the involved individuals to experience anxiety, hesitancy, and confusion (Morgan, 2006). Given the relatively recent institutional paradigm of departmental and programmatic eliminations, most institutions have not had the time to develop comprehensive guidelines for achieving this aim (Eckel, 2003). In this procedural vacuum, the shadow of uncertainty looms large, inserting a troublesome component into an already unpleasant academic event.

As a means of describing the various types of uncertainty experienced during organizational change, Bordia et al. (2004) developed a three-factor conceptual model comprising strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty. Based on the approaches of Buono and Bowditch (1989) and Jackson, Schuler, and Vredenburgh (1987), Bordia et al. (2004) differ from their theoretical predecessors by focusing on the individual level of
analysis, as opposed to a three-pronged approach encompassing organizational, group, and individual levels of scrutiny.

Concentrating on “the subjective experience or appraisal of different uncertainties by individuals in a changing organization” (Bordia et al., 2004, p.509), the research team posited three overarching themes as the locus of organizational uncertainty. In this regard, strategic uncertainty “refers to uncertainty regarding organization-level issues, such as reasons for change, planning and future direction of the organization, its sustainability, the nature of the business environment the organization will face, and so forth” (Bordia et al., 2004, p.510). Furthermore, structural uncertainty “refers to uncertainty arising from changes to the inner workings of the organization, such as reporting structures and functions of different work units” (Bordia et al., 2004, p.510). Finally, job-related uncertainty “includes uncertainty regarding job security, promotion opportunities, changes to the job role, and so forth” (Bordia et al., 2004, p.511). Under the auspices of this conceptual model, the three types of uncertainties interact “in a cascade-like fashion,” whereby “strategic uncertainty is likely to lead to structural uncertainty which, in turn, contributes to job-related uncertainty” (Bordia et al., 2004, p.511).

Rooted in the traditions of psychology and human resource development, Bordia et al. (2004) tested their conceptual model via a Likert-type survey at a state government department in the midst of organizational change. Recently separated from another state entity, the selected government department was dealing with the various ramifications of a statewide election, including: funding ambiguity, leadership turnover, internal restructuring, and a change in mission and business strategy. In order to assess the extent
to which uncertainty prevailed in this environment, surveys were mailed to all 1,283 organizational employees; 877 employees returned the survey, achieving a response rate of 68.4%.

Using regression analysis, Bordia et al. (2004) determined that the results supported the predicted model, underscoring the empirical relationship among strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties. Discussing this outcome, Bordia et al. (2004) make the following observation:

The organization had recently completed a de-amalgamation and experienced a change in government, both of which contributed to high levels of organizational instability. This was characterized by uncertainty about the business strategy, identity and role of the separate department, the new reporting relationships within the department, and different task and job demands upon employees. Employees were aware that the change in government signaled the need for the department to realign its business strategy and reanalyze the organization’s work processes. In this context of heightened ambiguity, employees were experiencing all three types of uncertainties (p. 523-525).

In presenting the results of this research, the authors acknowledge the limited generalizability of public sector studies to private enterprise, and additionally conceded the drawbacks of self-reported surveys. However, for the purposes of the present study, the findings elicited by the Bordia et al. (2004) conceptual framework warrant further application. Indeed, the similarities in organizational type (state government organization), unit of analysis (the individual), and organizational context (change) identify this study as a viable candidate for transference to qualitative methodology.

Though Bordia et al. (2004) adapted uncertainty reduction theory to organizational change, Berger and Calabrese (1975) pioneered uncertainty reduction theory as an explanatory model for understanding initial interactions between strangers. Uncertainty reduction theory assumes that when “strangers meet, their primary concern is
one of uncertainty reduction or increasing predictability about the behavior of both
themselves and others in the interaction” (p.100). This process of uncertainty reduction
proceeds in three phases: the entry phase, the personal phase, and the exit phase. In the
entry phase, communication content is limited to demographic data, as a means of
determining basic social information. The subsequent period is a personal phase,
whereby values, attitudes, and problems emerge as topics of conversation. Finally,
during the exit phase, the strangers determine the viability of future contact.

Elaborating on this theoretical construct, Berger and Calabrese (1975) posit
several axioms related to verbal communication and the reduction of uncertainty. For the
purposes of the present study, Axiom 3 serves as a guiding theoretical construct: “High
levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior” (p.103). Due to
the heightened uncertainty of departmental and programmatic eliminations, this axiom
applies to both inter-unit communication and intra-unit communication. Thus, as
department chairs and faculty members communicate within their departmental unit to
discuss attrition procedures, they may also seek counsel from individuals outside this
bounded entity.

While Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) study stands as a classic theoretical piece,
the authors acknowledged the need for “broader boundary conditions” (p.110). Indeed,
Berger and Calabrese’s (1975) construct assumes a relatively benign interaction among
strangers. Provided this caveat, it is imperative to include tenets of Kramer’s (1999)
motivation to reduce uncertainty model as an ancillary to Berger and Calabrese’s (1975)
Axiom 3. In his response to the originators of the theory, Kramer (1999) makes the
following observation: “Berger and Calabrese (1975) present uncertainty reduction as an
autonomous determinant of information seeking. However, communicators have multiple, often conflicting goals or motives that they must balance rather than maximizing any particular one” (p.309). Elaborating on this aim, Kramer (1999) points out the competing desires of avoiding costs while maximizing benefits. In order to reduce uncertainty under these constraints, Kramer (1999) posits a continuum of information-seeking behaviors, stating: “There are obtrusive (solicit/overt request) and unobtrusive (observe/indirect) ways of gaining information that range from passive (unsolicited) to active (overt/indirect)” (p.310). For the purposes of the present study, the relative balance of obtrusive information-seeking to unobtrusive information-gathering will provide a theoretically-grounded means of analyzing interview transcripts.

Summary

Though scholarship on departmental and programmatic eliminations has yet to reach critical mass, the few academic publications addressing this topic herald a paradigm born of complementary historical and financial phenomena. Indeed, the untimely confluences of curricular change, economic recession, and consequent revenue-generating institutional orientation have combined to create the conditions necessary for academic downsizing. Forced to contend with shrinking monetary resources, many collegiate administrators now perceive a narrowed scope of academic offerings as the only viable financial solution. Underscoring the importance of external environmental pressures on the internal workings of a public-sector organization, this body of literature exemplifies the critical function of contextualization in case studies of academic attrition.

While outside forces certainly constrain an institution’s decision-making capacity, faculty advocacy constitutes a significant impediment to the implementation of
departmental and/or programmatic eliminations. A highly politicized process, the successful defense of academic hegemony is highly dependent upon the actions (or inactions) of the department chair. Elected by his or her disciplinary colleagues, the department chair is expected to negotiate multifarious role orientations and interpersonal interactions. The extent to which department chairs successfully execute these role orientations and effectively communicate with their faculty colleagues is theorized to contribute to the reduction and mitigation of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties.

Chapter 3 will explicate the methodology utilized to explore department chair and faculty perceptions of eliminating their unit or an affiliated program. Features of this chapter include an outline of the chosen research design, in addition to the rationale for site selection and the parameters for participant inclusion. In accordance with qualitative case study protocol, this chapter also describes the various modes of data collection, encompassing numerous primary and secondary perspectives. An explication of analytical procedures follows this breakdown, leading to discussions of credibility, transferability, consistency, and ethics. Meditations on a related pilot study conclude this chapter, reflecting the highly emotional context of this qualitative inquiry.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The lived experience of implementing departmental and programmatic eliminations is a burgeoning area of research in American higher education. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the relevant literature on this emergent topic, highlighting the historical, financial, and social developments which have precipitated this trend. Though solid empirical scholarship is lacking in the field of academic retrenchment, a few seminal works do touch on the organizational (Brint et al., 2005; Eckel, 2003; Kissler, 1997) and broader intellectual implications (Slaughter, 1993) of departmental and programmatic discontinuance. As such, while Eckel (2003) remains the gold standard in this domain, his suggestions for future research underscore the breadth of untapped scholarly inquiry. Heeding Eckel’s (2003) call to “explore the impact of program discontinuance more deeply” by “focus[ing] on similar questions at an individual level” (p.166-167), this chapter presents the qualitative research methodology necessary to achieve this aim.

Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

Prior to discussing the mechanics of research design, I would like to take the opportunity to share the ontological and epistemological assumptions which undergird this study. In this regard, a foundation of qualitative inquiry is the existence of multiple, subjective realities as opposed to a singular, universal truth (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, the relationship between the researcher and participants is collaborative in nature, privileging research “in the field” over artificial laboratory settings (Creswell, 2007, p.18). As such, this study will juxtapose authorial characterizations and individual quotations, as a means of reinforcing my choice of thematic constructs.
In addition to these ontological underpinnings, I wish to disclose my personal epistemological philosophy with respect to this project. As emphasized by Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, and Hayes (2009), “epistemological awareness is an important and informative part of the transparent research process that needs to be addressed and communicated to readers” (p.687). Heeding their call, I identify this study as constructivist in nature. In this regard, I aim “to describe individuals’ perspectives, experiences, and meaning-making processes” with respect to the departmental and/or programmatic elimination process (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p.689). When writing from a constructivist perspective, it is the researcher’s duty to impart a detailed account of the practice under study; as an individual with first-hand departmental elimination experience (as a graduate assistant in an eliminated academic department), I believe I am in a unique position to offer keen analytical insight into this under-researched phenomenon.

**Design of the Study**

Utilizing the emergent, qualitative case study design advocated by Merriam (1998), my intent was to gain an “in-depth understanding…of a single unit or bounded system” (p.19). In this instance, the bounded system was four academic departments impacted by departmental or programmatic eliminations at Mountain University during the 2011-2013 biennial budgetary cycle. In an effort to illuminate this broader construct, I examined four instrumental iterations (Creswell, 2007) of a departmental/programmatic elimination: two units slated for elimination but ultimately saved, and two units eliminated outright. Within these iterations, I interviewed the department chair and anywhere from one to three faculty members, in an effort to understand the resultant
individual experiences characteristic of these unique outcomes. According to Yin (2009), a multiple, embedded case study has significant advantages over the traditional, single case format. In this regard, “the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as more robust” (Yin, 2009, p.53).

In addition to the aforementioned structural attributes, I also elected to delimit or “bind” the case study design via the unit of analysis and time period under consideration (Creswell, 2007). As such, the exclusive focus on individual department chairs and faculty members organizationally confines this study to the department, but with an individual level of analysis. Furthermore, the chosen time period spans the initial awareness of a possible departmental or programmatic elimination and runs through the implementation of the official directive to close the department or program. In general, this timeline encompasses a 1-2 year time period, with variations by participant, and departmental iteration. For instance, individuals in the “saved” unit had a shorter timeline, as they did not have to comply with a directive to close their unit. However, individuals in the “saved” unit were invited to comment on how the specter of elimination has or has not changed their individual orientation and the orientation of the departmental leadership.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore department chair and faculty perceptions of implementing a departmental or programmatic elimination. Specifically, this study addressed the extent to which strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties prevailed during a departmental or programmatic elimination. This study took place at a public, research intensive institution located in the western region of the
United States (hereafter referred to as Mountain University), and focused on the events leading up to and including the implementation of the state’s 2011-2013 legislative appropriation for higher education.

**Research Questions**

Upon review of the relevant literature, it became apparent that the departmental and programmatic elimination process is an under-researched topic of inquiry. As such, I aimed to address the following research questions during the course of this study:

1. How do individuals experience a departmental/programmatic elimination?
2. To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations?
3. How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties?
4. How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units?

These research questions flow from the conceptual framework of uncertainty reduction theory, highlighting the complex interaction between faculty members and department chairs during a departmental/programmatic elimination.

**Site Selection**

The rationale for selecting Mountain University for this case study was directly attributable to the institution’s fiscal predicament as a public institution. A microcosm of the broader national recession, the extreme financial plight of Mountain state forced the legislature to enact drastic cuts to the 2011-2013 Mountain University biennial budget. According to the budget proposed by the state’s governor, Mountain University needed to
eliminate $47.5 million from its operating expenses over the next two years (Lake, February 16, 2011). As a consequence of this 29.1% reduction in state appropriations, the executive leadership of Mountain University decided to cut $25 million in academic affairs as a partial means of meeting the overall $47.5 million target (Mountain University senior administrator, personal communication, February 15, 2011).

Furthermore, due to substantial budget reductions totaling $49.6 million for the fiscal years 2008, 2009, and 2010, Mountain University faced the grim reality of financial exigency (Mountain university senior administrator, personal communication, February 15, 2011). Akin to institutional bankruptcy, financial exigency is a legal declaration that allows fiscal decision-making to proceed without regard to contractual obligations. At a research intensive institution such as Mountain University, where salary commitments encumber the majority of appropriated expenditures (Woodward, Burchell, Wagner, & Knight, 2004), financial exigency generally refers to the ability to fire or substantially reduce the salaries of tenured faculty members (Lake, February 16, 2011). Provided this scenario, academic departmental and programmatic eliminations became the means by which to reduce the substantial salary obligations of faculty members, placing Mountain University at the forefront of this new paradigm in public higher education.

**Selection of Participants**

Selection of participants was based upon purposive sampling. Bernard and Ryan (2010) encourage the use of purposive sampling “in the study of special and hard-to-find populations” (p.365). Furthermore, “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p.61). As the intent of
this study was to examine the perceptions of department chairs and faculty members in an eliminated department or program, the pool of participants that meet these criteria was necessarily limited. Through a review of publically available Mountain University institutional documentation, I was able to determine which departments/programs met this criteria, and formed a contact list using the Mountain University electronic directory. Individuals with whom I had contact on a personal or professional level were excluded from this study; however, this represented less than 5% of eligible participants. All individuals contacted and ultimately interviewed were strangers in the following sense: I had never met or spoken to these individuals prior to the present study.

In this regard, I selected thirteen representative individuals: the department chair and anywhere from one to three faculty members in four distinct departmental units (two saved units and two eliminated units). All eligible department chairs received a physical letter of contact inviting them to participate in this study. The willingness of the department chair to participate in this study determined which units were ultimately selected for inclusion. Faculty in units with participating department chairs were then contacted for inclusion in this study. Responses to the physical letters of contact and a subsequent electronic follow-up email yielded between one and three participating faculty members per unit. As such, random selection was not employed as there were never more than three faculty members in any of the four units who were willing to participate. However, variations by gender and rank (assistant, associate, and full professors) were obtained through this recruitment.
Data Collection Procedures

Upon receipt of institutional review board (IRB) approval, data collection and recruitment proceeded in earnest. Interviews were conducted in a natural setting (Mountain University faculty offices), lasted between forty-five minutes and one and a half hours, and were of the semi-structured variety. Though the intent of this interview process was to ask the same (or highly similar) questions of all participants, Merriam (1998) advised a more flexible interview format. Given the probability of mid-interview adjustments, differences in organizational outcome, (ex: eliminated or “saved”) and the prevalence of narrative variations, it was best to allow individuals the opportunity to “define the world in unique ways” (Merriam, 1998, p.74). Interview guides, consisting of 7-8 broad questions, structured the interviews [see Appendices A-D for complete interview protocols]. Furthermore, interviews were recorded both on audio cassette and in digital format, in order to account for possible equipment failures (Yow, 2005). Extensive notes were taken in lieu of recording for individuals who did not wish to have their interviews taped; only two individuals out of thirteen declined to have their interviews recorded.

Additional observation of pertinent public meetings (ex: Faculty Senate meetings, governing board meetings, etc.) complemented the aforementioned formal interviews. Furthermore, document collection coincided with and in many instances preceded the formal interviews. In accordance with case study protocol (Merriam, 1998), document collection encompassed “public records, personal documents, and physical material” (p.113). Public records included newspaper accounts, identifiable internet postings, television programming, meeting minutes (of Faculty Senate meetings, governing board
meetings, etc.), and institutional publications (official Mountain University e-mails, website postings, and accounting documents). Personal documents included private written or emailed correspondence, anonymous internet postings, and confidential internal documentation associated with the individual and/or department. The sum of these documents represented the unobservable “paper trail”—a key facet of case study methodology (Merriam, 1998, p.114).

**Data Analysis Procedures**

According to Merriam (1998), “data collection and data analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research” (p.151). In this regard, data analysis began with the collection of the first public document related to the study, and began in earnest when all relevant interviews and private correspondence were collected. Constant comparison and analytic induction comprised the bulk of the data analysis, and was applied to documents, interview transcripts, and observations (Merriam, 1998). To assist with data management, I used the qualitative software program ATLAS.ti to organize my codes and construct my categories (Lewins & Silver, 2004). Moreover, the conceptual framework of uncertainty reduction theory (Bordia et al., 2004) and Berg’s (2007) concept of latent and manifest messaging aided in the identification of key themes for use in the final written analysis (Merriam, 1998). Given the emergent nature of case study research, additional thematic selections emanated from the personalized depictions of the study’s participants [see Appendix E for a more detailed explanation of data analysis].

Furthermore, given the selection of a multiple case study design, within-case analysis and cross-case analysis occurred in reference to this study. As delineated by Merriam (2009):
For the *within-case analysis*, each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself. Data are gathered so the researcher can learn as much about the contextual variables as possible that might have a bearing on the case. Once the analysis of each case is completed, *cross-case analysis* begins. A qualitative, inductive, multicase study seeks to build abstractions across cases (p.204).

In this regard, Creswell’s (2007) data analysis spiral (p.151) provides a visual representation of the analytic process used to transform qualitative evidence into a coherent narrative account.

*Figure 1. Adapted from Creswell’s (2007) data analysis spiral*

Moving from data collection to the management, description, and final representation of a case, Creswell’s (2007) explanatory technique depicts the procedural methodology I employed during the phase of within-case analysis. Upon completion of this developmental aspect, I compared the two saved cases against the two eliminated cases in order to determine similarities and differences among the various iterations of departmental/programmatic eliminations. Essentially, the overarching goal of this cross-case analysis was to extend the literature on the departmental/programmatic elimination process through the comparison of two unique outcomes characteristic of academic downsizing.
Credibility (Internal Validity)

A variety of methodological techniques can enhance the credibility (internal validity) of case study research. As defined by Merriam (2009), qualitative credibility “deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (p.213). In this regard, three components of qualitative research deal directly with this concern: researcher as data collection instrument, triangulation, and member checking. Thus, the subsequent narrative addressed each component on an individual basis.

In a departure from quantitative research, qualitative inquiry supports the use of a live investigator as an interpretive medium (Merriam, 2009). As such, the internal validity of any qualitative study is inherently dependent upon the competence of the individual analyst. In an effort to address this legitimate concern, I wish to disclose my academic qualifications. From 2003-2009, I searched for qualitative truth via the discipline of history at the University of South Florida. Having received undergraduate and graduate degrees from this four-year research institution, I enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to complete my doctorate in higher education leadership. As a condition of the program, I completed two advanced research courses to fulfill my graduation requirement: advanced qualitative research and case study methodology. Provided my longstanding affiliation with and affinity for qualitative research, I believe I possessed the academic qualifications necessary to undertake and successfully analyze the proposed study.

In addition to the aptitude of the research instrument, triangulation plays an integral part in ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study. As defined by Creswell (2007), “in triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources,
methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (p.208). While the dissertation process is by nature an individual activity, I made use of multiple sources (ex: newspaper accounts, individual narratives, institutional documentation, etc.), methods (ex: interviews, observations of public meetings, document analysis), and theories (Bordia et al., 2004, and others as data warrants) in order to achieve this aim. Recognizing that the strength of my conclusions is dependent upon the preponderance of presented evidence, I provided confirmatory declarations from a variety of stakeholder perspectives.

Having discussed research instrumentation and triangulation, I will now discuss member checking as the final component of qualitative credibility. As defined by Merriam (2009), member checking allows you to “solicit feedback on your emerging findings from some of the people that you interviewed” (p.217). Predicated on the principle of multiple lived experiences (Merriam, 2009), member checking ensures that research findings are consonant with the narrator’s reality. Moreover, member checking provides a clear avenue for clarification, as it is unlikely that all imparted terminology and conceptual constructs will be interpreted by the researcher and narrator in the same fashion. All individual participants were provided the opportunity to review their interview transcript or interview notes in order to clarify their positions on emergent research findings.

**Transferability (External Validity)**

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative studies do not claim applicability to other situations. Indeed, the hallmark of a qualitative case study is its in-depth description of a unique and bounded occurrence. Given this paradigmatic distinction,
qualitative methodologists reject the notion of external validity in favor of transferability (Merriam, 2009). In employing this qualitative construct, “the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere” (Merriam, 2009, p.224). As such, it was my obligation as the investigator to provide a narrative account sufficient to achieve this aim. Thus, I presented detailed descriptions of individual experiences with the departmental and/or programmatic elimination process, providing the audience with the information necessary to determine transference. As a goal of this study is to provide guidance to other individuals dealing with departmental/programmatic eliminations, I adhered to the highest standards of narrative description.

**Consistency (Reliability)**

In the same manner as external validity, reliability is not a stated aim of qualitative inquiry. As highlighted by Merriam (2009): “Reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behavior is never static” (p.220). Thus, when dealing with personal experiences, the crucial question is “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 2009, p.221). In this regard, I employed an extensive audit trail by “describing in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 1998, p.207). In an expansion of this construct, Yin (2009) advocates the creation of “a formal, presentable database, so that in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study reports” (p.119). In addition, I included ample appendices as a means of enhancing the transparency of my actions.
Ethical Considerations

Due to the emotional sensitivity and political implications inherent in departmental and programmatic eliminations, participant anonymity was of paramount concern. Considerable care was taken to safeguard the name of the department/program, as well as those narrators who agree to participate in the study. As such, pseudonyms and broad administrative terminology permeate my research findings. In this manner, all participants (except for the pilot study) were assigned a nondescript pseudonym and referred to using male pronouns in order to guard against gendered identification. I use the term “department chair” throughout this study in reference to department chairs, directors, and program chairs (Merriam, 1998). Faculty rank and other identifiable demographic data were omitted from the findings in order to further ensure participant anonymity. In order to guard against bias, I also took care to “switch back and forth between the emic and the etic perspectives”--thinking critically and challenging findings (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p.110). Finally, as a means of reciprocity (Creswell, 2007), participants received a copy of their interview transcript or interview notes, a copy of their signed informed consent, an electronic audio file of their interview (where applicable), a copy of the final dissertation, and a hand-written thank-you note. As additional ethical issues arose throughout the course of this study, I discussed them with my dissertation chair in order to arrive at an appropriate solution.

Pilot Study

As a means of testing the viability of the proposed project, I conducted a pilot study of my eliminated department chair interview protocol on April 7, 2011. According to Yin (2009), a pilot study is a formative exercise which assists the researcher in
developing “relevant lines of questions—possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design as well” (p.92). In an effort to obtain this type of methodological guidance, I contacted Department Chair X, the leader of a Mountain University unit eliminated during the 2009-2011 budgetary biennium. As a means of reinforcing the rationale for my proposed study, I detail the methodology, analysis, and findings of the April 7, 2011 pilot study below.

Methodology of the Pilot Study

The foundation of this pilot study was a one-hour, semi-structured interview. According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), semi-structured interviews are flexible entities, designed to allow individuals to “speak out, in their own terms” (p.29). Though an interview protocol guided this process, broad questioning provided the narrator with ample opportunity to comfortably converse about this painful chapter in her academic career. Examples of such overarching lines of inquiry included: “How is a departmental elimination carried out?” and “What have you learned from this departmental elimination process?” Gentle probes, mostly of the “tell-me-more” variety (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p.32), guided the conversation. Following the interview, I transcribed the conversation verbatim, with the resultant text forming the basis for my data analysis.

According to Creswell (2007), the use of a natural setting is a key characteristic of qualitative research, and a major component of studying an individual in context. In keeping with this tradition, I conducted this interview in the department chair’s faculty office. In order to account for possible equipment failures (Yow, 2005), I recorded this session on a traditional cassette recorder as well as digitally via a Livescribe smart pen. Utilizing Merriam’s (1998) advice for conducting effective interviews, I began with
“relatively neutral, descriptive information” (p.82). As this first-order narrative (Creswell, 2007) progressed, responses became increasingly personalized, and flowed more freely than in the beginning of the conversation. Indeed, as the interview wore on, the department chair’s narrative came to resemble a stream of consciousness, thus obviating my need for continuous probes.

In the interest of full disclosure, I would like to acknowledge my professional relationship with the department chair—she was previously known to me on a professional level. Given this interaction, my rapport with the narrator was more relaxed and collegial than it would have been had I discussed this situation with a complete stranger. As underscored by Merriam (1998): “The interviewer-respondent interaction is a complex phenomenon. Both parties bring biases, predispositions, attitudes, and physical characteristics that color the interaction and the data elicited. A skilled interviewer accounts for these factors in order to evaluate the data being obtained” (p.87).

Taking Merriam’s (1998) advice into account, I conducted this interview from the perspective of a future higher education professional, seeking to understand the context of a departmental elimination. A complex and convoluted process, the department chair guided me through the cost-cutting drivers which precipitated the elimination, the administrative reports which singled out the department as a high-cost program, and the eventual realization that the department she had nurtured for twenty years would cease to exist. Moving to the next phase of the interview, implementation of the elimination, it was evident that her ability to maintain multiple leadership roles allowed her to combat the strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties which characterized this process (Bordia et al., 2004). Furthermore, the loss of this department was not without
unintended consequences (Eckel, 2003), including loss of quality researchers, declines in productivity, and an inevitable leadership drain due to the department’s inability to provide continued training for students in this department.

Data Analysis

Using the conceptual framework of uncertainty reduction theory advanced by Bordia et al. (2004) in conjunction with literature on department chair roles (Berdrow, 2010), I engaged in the process of analytic induction (Merriam, 1998). In this manner, I followed the guidance of Creswell’s (2007) data analysis spiral, reading and re-reading the transcript until I gained an acute awareness of the interview content. Reflecting on the connections between the narrated account and the related scholarship (Berdrow, 2010; Bordia et al., 2004), I began the process of open coding in ATLAS.ti, where I matched the interview data with the major tenets of the research literature (Creswell, 2007). This initial iteration yielded four codes: strategic uncertainty, structural uncertainty, job-related uncertainty, and department chair roles. In the subsequent axial coding phase, I broke department chair roles into several discrete entities, encompassing the various responsibilities associated with a departmental elimination. Upon completion of this phase, I used the network view in ATLAS.ti to engage in selective coding, assembling the various constructs into an interrelated explanatory model (Creswell, 2007). During this process, I added new codes to strengthen the connections among the existing codes, resulting in a visual representation of the department chair’s account of her unit’s elimination.
Findings and Conclusion of the Pilot Study

Reflecting upon the departmental elimination process—a practice steeped in uncertainty—I asked myself the following question: “What is the root cause of this unfortunate state of affairs?” After reading and re-reading the interview text, and staring at the mish mash of codes in my ATLAS.ti network view, I arrived at the following conclusion: a sense of urgency prompts the uncertainty, which in turn prompts the department chair to concentrate on a specific set of roles unique to her position. Having settled on this interpretation, I then asked myself the following question: “What would diminish the sense of urgency precipitating this chain of events?” Looking to the literature, I found guidance in Eckel’s (2003) seminal work on academic attrition. In his case study of program discontinuance at four Carnegie classified research institutions, Eckel (2003) expounded on the centrality of campus-wide planning to a sound and rational decision-making process. Provided Eckel’s (2003) commentary, and the findings elicited from Department Chair X, it is apparent that sound and rational decision-making includes planning for the process of departmental and programmatic eliminations, in addition to establishing a long-range vision for the reductions themselves.

Indeed, while Mountain University survived both the 2009-2011 and 2011-2013 biennium, the long-term consequences of this budgetary biopsy remain shrouded in uncertainty. In her interview for this pilot study, Department Chair X warned of lost research productivity, diminished morale, and a leadership drain as long-term consequences of departmental eliminations. For Mountain University to remain competitive as a research institution, and continue to attract top-notch faculty and students, a long-term outlook must become part of the institutional culture. In order to
diminish the sense of urgency prompting institutional decision-making. Mountain University must codify and delineate a concrete set of criteria by which to make institutional downsizing recommendations. Clearly, academic attrition is about more than cost-savings on an institutional balance sheet. It is imperative that Mountain University fulfill its obligations to the department chairs and faculty members who must implement elimination directives, by providing them with the guidance necessary to achieve these ends.

Now that I have illustrated the functional importance of the pilot data, I will graphically display my plan for conducting the proposed qualitative study. The table below explicates each of my research questions, the data sources I will use to answer each question, and the techniques I will employ to analyze these data sources. The results of this process shall be outlined in the following chapter, providing the reader with a complete narrative description of the study’s findings. The addition of data sources and analytical techniques may be required, as dependent upon the information elicited from respondent interviews.
Table 1

Data Analysis Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Source(s)</th>
<th>Proposed Analysis Technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do individuals experience a potential departmental/programmatic elimination? | -Interviews with department chairs and faculty members  
-Observation of Faculty Senate meetings  
-Observation of governing board meetings  
-Public/private documents  
-Public meeting minutes | Use of theoretical framework (Bordia et al., 2004) via analytic induction  
-Use of Berg’s (2007) concept of latent/manifest messaging via analytic induction  
-Use of ATLAS.ti to aid in construction of codes/categories  
-Use of constant comparison/analytic induction |
| To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations? | -Interviews with department chairs and faculty members  
-Observation of Faculty Senate meetings  
-Observation of governing board meetings  
-Public/private documents  
-Public meeting minutes | Use of theoretical framework (Bordia et al., 2004) via analytic induction  
-Use of Berg’s (2007) concept of latent/manifest messaging via analytic induction  
-Use of ATLAS.ti to aid in construction of codes/categories  
-Use of constant comparison/analytic induction |
| How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties? | -Interviews with department chairs and faculty members  
-Observation of Faculty Senate meetings  
-Observation of governing board meetings  
-Public/private documents  
-Public meeting minutes | -Use of Berg’s (2007) concept of latent/manifest messaging via analytic induction  
-Use of ATLAS.ti to aid in construction of codes/categories  
-Use of constant comparison/analytic induction |
| How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units? | -Interviews with department chairs and faculty members  
-Public/private documents | Use of theoretical framework (Bordia et al., 2004) via analytic induction  
-Use of Berg’s (2007) concept of latent/manifest messaging via analytic induction  
-Use of ATLAS.ti to aid in construction of codes/categories  
-Use of constant comparison/analytic induction |
Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology that will be used to conduct this study. Topics encompassed a wide-range of methodological considerations, including: epistemological and ontological assumptions, research design, site selection, selection of participants, data collection procedures, data analysis process, and discussions of credibility, transferability, consistency, and ethics. In an effort to bolster my choice of qualitative methodology, this chapter also included a detailed description of a related pilot study. In this regard, the findings of the pilot study support my selections of uncertainty reduction theory (Bordia et al., 2004), case study design (Merriam, 1998), and individual unit of analysis (Eckel, 2003) in this broader research proposal. Aided by the analytical capacity of ATLAS.ti, I aim to expand the literature base on departmental and programmatic eliminations by offering a rich, thick description of lived experience (Merriam, 2009). Chapter 4 shall explicate the results of this qualitative undertaking, with reference to each individual case and cross-case constructs.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Though periodicals and trade publications decry the burgeoning trend towards academic downsizing, (Carlson, 2011; Ehrenberg, 2006; Lake, 2011) scholarly research on departmental and programmatic eliminations is still in its infancy (Brint et al., 2005; Eckel, 2003; Rosser, 2012; Slaughter, 1993). While no college or university is immune from revenue declines, budget crises, and attendant discussions of institutional retrenchment, public universities are particularly vulnerable to the political and economic whims of their situated state (Hovey, 1999; McLendon et al., 2009; Tandberg, 2010).

Unlike other state functions such as K-12 education, Medicaid, transportation maintenance, and corrections, higher education services are non-compulsory and have a failsafe method of external finance in the form of student tuition. Legally committed to providing these other essential services, state legislatures have placed public post-secondary institutions in the precarious position of choosing between substantial tuition increases and scaling back their educational offerings. Recognizing the link between declines in student enrollment and significant tuition hikes, higher education administrators frequently blend the two approaches as a means of minimizing the impact of state revenue reductions.

State Context

Reeling from the most recent national recession, Mountain State epitomized the aforementioned trends in public finance. While the size of Mountain State’s population precludes the exponential increases in correctional spending seen in other areas of the country, the table below indicates that the percentage of the state budget devoted to
Health and Human Services, K-12 education, and transportation increased from fiscal year 2008 to fiscal year 2012, while the state’s commitment to higher education decreased during this same time period (Mountain State Open Government Initiative, 2012). Plagued by double-digit unemployment, Mountain State’s Health and Human Services department struggled to absorb the surge in welfare and Medicaid applicants, forcing the state to devote additional portions of the budget to cover these services.

Though year-over-year population increases began to decline after 2008, Mountain State had added nearly 800,000 new residents in the preceding decade (Governor, 2011). In turn, the influx of these new families necessitated improvements to the existing transportation infrastructure, as well as the construction of significant numbers of schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. However, in keeping with Mountain State tradition, these objectives were to be accomplished via existing taxes on sales and discretionary services, and not thorough additional levies on personal or business income (Governor, 2011).

Table 2

Mountain State Expenditures on Top Five State Functions as a Percentage of Total Statewide Spending, FY 2008-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HHS</td>
<td>27.06%</td>
<td>HHS: 27.01%</td>
<td>HHS: 28.52%</td>
<td>HHS: 29.31%</td>
<td>HHS: 32.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K12</td>
<td>18.33%</td>
<td>K12: 19.70%</td>
<td>K12: 18.46%</td>
<td>K12: 18.80%</td>
<td>K12: 22.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>9.36%</td>
<td>TRA: 8.80%</td>
<td>TRA: 8.63%</td>
<td>TRA: 9.16%</td>
<td>TRA: 10.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>9.17%</td>
<td>HE: 8.73%</td>
<td>HE: 8.30%</td>
<td>HE: 8.21%</td>
<td>HE: 6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEB</td>
<td>5.54%</td>
<td>TRE: 6.15%</td>
<td>TRE: 6.90%</td>
<td>TRE: 7.33%</td>
<td>PEB: 5.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. HHS=Health & Human Services, K12=K-12 education, TRA=Transportation, HE=Higher Education, PEB=Public Employee Benefits, TRE=Treasurer’s Office Adapted from the Mountain State Open Government Initiative, Statewide Expenditure Summary by Department, FY 2008-FY2012.
Institutional Context

Delivered to the state legislature on January 20, 2011, the Governor’s executive budget for the 2011-2013 biennium pledged no new taxes and significant cuts to state spending. Reflecting on this decision, the Governor declared: “[Mountain State] families and businesses have made do with less through three long years of economic downturn, and it is my belief that state government must continue to do the same” (Governor, 2011).

Taking a closer look at the analytical profile of Mountain University, it is clear that the national recession and shifting priorities of Mountain State had taken a significant toll on the composition of this institution. A research intensive university located in the western region of the United States, Mountain University is a relatively young, (less than 100 years old) urban commuter institution with an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students. Roughly 80% of the student body is undergraduate, with the remaining 20% enrolled in graduate coursework. As of Fall 2011, Mountain University employed nearly 800 full-time instructional faculty members, defined as individuals at the professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and lecturer/instructor levels (Mountain University Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2011).

While the aforementioned figures represent an accurate snapshot of the institution at present, a historical comparison of state funding allocations, faculty composition, and student enrollment provides an enhanced characterization of Mountain University. As the tables below indicate, Mountain University had undergone significant changes in the years immediately following the 2007 recession and leading up to the 2011-2013 budgetary biennium. Like other institutions in the Mountain State System of Higher Education, Mountain University had seen its share of state general fund support diminish
over the past five fiscal years (ex: fiscal year 2008 occurred from July 1, 2007 through
June 30, 2008). As a means of offsetting these reductions in state support, Mountain
University proposed tuition and fee increases, as well as departmental/programmatic
eliminations (Mountain State System of Higher Education Approved State Budgets, FY

Table 3

Percentage of Mountain University Operating Budget Derived from State General Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>64.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>58.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36.53%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>60.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>57.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The FY2010 budget included the infusion of one-time federal stimulus funds
Adapted from the Mountain State System of Higher Education Approved State Budgets, FY 2008-FY2012.

Recognizing that no budgetary action occurs in a vacuum, it is important to note
changes to the faculty and student profile of Mountain University during this same time
period. Though the most marked difference from Fall 2007-Fall 2011 is the significant
reduction in full-time faculty members as compared to the relatively constant number of
enrolled students, a closer examination of the institutional data yields additional
conclusions. From Fall 2007-Fall 2011, the percentage of faculty at the professor and
associate professor ranks increased, while those at the assistant professor level decreased
(Mountain University Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2012). As those individuals at
the rank of assistant professor are generally untenured, this statistic is indicative of
Mountain University’s priority of preserving the positions of tenured faculty members in
the wake of departmental/programmatic eliminations. However, given the significant
reduction in overall faculty numbers relative to student headcount, it is clear that the
workload of these remaining full-time faculty members would have to increase in order
to make up for the loss of institutional colleagues.

Table 4

*Full-Time Instructional Faculty by Rank, Fall 2007-Fall 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Figures include tenured and non-tenured full-time faculty members. Adapted from
Mountain University Institutional Analysis and Planning.

In tandem with the shift in faculty composition, the student profile of Mountain
University had also changed as a result of state budget reductions. Though student
headcount had steadily increased throughout the preceding decade due to the population
surge in Mountain State, this trend reversed in Fall 2010 with the implementation of the
2009-2011 biennial budget. In addition to significant tuition increases, the 2009-2011
budget reductions resulted in the elimination of entire departments as well as
undergraduate and graduate degree programs. While undergraduate enrollment continued
to climb, graduate enrollment had dropped precipitously by Fall 2011, perhaps due in part to the greater economies of scale achieved in larger undergraduate courses.

Table 5

*Total Student Headcount by Level, Fall 2007-Fall 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Fall 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>21,962</td>
<td>22,149</td>
<td>22,708</td>
<td>22,538</td>
<td>22,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>5,250</td>
<td>5,656</td>
<td>5,556</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>4,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27,988</td>
<td>28,605</td>
<td>29,069</td>
<td>28,203</td>
<td>27,364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Mountain University Institutional Analysis and Planning.

In the midst of these profound changes in institutional composition, I began to wonder how individual faculty members dealt with potential strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties. Furthermore, I wanted to follow through on the findings of my pilot study with Department Chair X, in order to ascertain the effects of the department chair in mitigating the uncertainty of faculty colleagues. Finally, I wanted to compare and contrast these uncertainties as they pertained to “saved” and eliminated units. In a conscious effort to humanize a process often characterized by financial projections, balance ledgers, and other numeric depictions, I interviewed a total of thirteen faculty members (four “department chairs” and nine tenured faculty members) as to their experiences with departmental closure and programmatic elimination during the 2011-2013 budgetary biennium at Mountain University. These thirteen individuals represented four discrete units: Units 1 and 2 dealt with the potential elimination of their units but
were ultimately spared this fate, while Units 3 and 4 dealt with the actual elimination of their units.

In the pages that follow, I will separately discuss each unit by providing a short vignette of the “department chair” and affiliated faculty members, thereby answering my initial research question: How do individuals experience a potential departmental/programmatic elimination? Once I have accomplished this objective, I will move to my second research question: To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations? Then, I will conclude each unitary overview with a discussion of research question three: How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties? Once I have accomplished these objectives, I will compare and contrast the saved units (Units 1 and 2) and eliminated units (Units 3 and 4) in order to answer research question four: How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units? A summary of findings concludes this chapter.

Unit 1

In this section, I present four vignettes, each outlining the participant’s personal experiences with the 2011-2013 budget reduction process at Mountain University. Though their unit was ultimately saved from elimination, this fate was far from certain during the institution’s attempts to balance a decrease in state funding against outstanding budgetary obligations [see Appendix F for a timeline of 2011-2013 biennial budget process]. Interviewed approximately one year after this process unfolded, these faculty members were asked to reflect on this tumultuous time in their professional careers.
Dr. Smith: Chair of Unit 1

Cognizant of the legislative and gubernatorial rankling over the budget, Dr. Smith braced himself for the very real possibility of having to defend the existence of his unit. With fewer majors than many other units in the College, Dr. Smith recognized that “we’re potential targets” during any budget reduction discussion. Though he had anticipated this outcome as early as mid-February 2011 (consistent with the Provost’s initial email directing Deans to make vertical cuts), confirmation of these suspicions occurred shortly thereafter. Reflecting on these communiqués, Dr. Smith stated: “I heard the first week of March…from a colleague who was at some kind of council where they [Mountain University administrators] were talking that we were on the [cut] list there. And so I heard from somebody else. And the Dean himself told me on March 8” (official release date of first budget reduction proposal).

Determined to avoid the elimination of his unit, Dr. Smith conjured his competitive spirit, describing himself as “just sort of consumed with it, as you would expect.” Reinforcing this assertion, Dr. Smith recounted the following:

I would ask my [significant other], “Weren’t you in a line with Caroline Kennedy one time, you know, where you guys were waiting…at the New York state fair, and you were all excited to meet her? Do you think she’d remember you?” Like every night, I would lie awake and think like “Who do I know who is influential?”

In addition to his sleepless nights, Dr. Smith’s experienced long, stressful days in his Mountain University office. Concerned about the future of the unit, students turned to Dr. Smith for academic advice. In describing these interactions, he stated:

I mean, I had students coming in every day saying “Should I change my major?” Right? “I heard this was going to be cut, so what are we going to do?” And, I mean, I told the students “this is not going to happen.” …And they’re like “Why?” And I was like “I am not going to let this happen.”
From March 8 through September 9, 2011, Dr. Smith endured four distinct Mountain University budget reduction proposals, monitored the results of two crucial governing body meetings [see Appendix F], and ultimately won the fight to save his unit. Contemplating this triumph, Dr. Smith made this metaphoric comparison: “When it was all over, it was kind of like people often describe a car accident. Like, you know, when you’re in it…your adrenaline…and then after…[expression indicative of exhaustion].” Though he suffered from ennui in the immediate aftermath, Dr. Smith began to reflect on this experience, and his feelings toward Mountain University, during the intervening year. In a telling exchange, Dr. Smith revealed his stance on the subject of institutional loyalty:

I do think there is a kind of scarring that like, that’s not completely business as usual. Kind of like…for instance, I have a lot of um…shirts, various kinds of shirts, that have [Mountain University] logos. I won’t wear them. You know? I just like…you can’t give that kind of connection to that university, and sort of pride in it…like, “No. This is the university that said we’ll cut you if we have to.” Like, yeah, I don’t want to wear them [the shirts]. You know, I don’t want to wear anything with [Mountain University] on it, right? (Dr. Smith, personal communication, February 16, 2012)

Dr. Xavier

Accustomed to the institutional culture at Mountain University, Dr. Xavier calmly reacted to the news of potential elimination: “There wasn’t anything I could do about it, so why should I get upset?” Employed as a “factory worker” at Mountain University for a considerable length of time, Dr. Xavier was a seasoned veteran of the institution’s “business model” of academic governance. While traditional university tenets espouse shared governance between faculty and administrators, Dr. Xavier described his role in the budget reduction process in the following manner:

I had no say, nothing. See, that’s the business model. The business model is
people on the seventh floor administration building run the university. The rest of us are employees.

Beyond the business model, Dr. Xavier had other reasons for maintaining emotional equilibrium. Familiar with the lengthy legislative and bureaucratic processes involved in implementing institutional layoffs, Dr. Xavier embraced the fluidity of the situation, stating:

…the legislature still had six months before it would recess, and then any decision made would be another year before it’d be implemented, so there are like 18 months between the time we found out we were slated for elimination and the time anything would actually be done. In 18 months a lot can happen, so that’s another reason why I wasn’t too upset about it.

In the interim, Dr. Xavier contacted the unit’s professional association, provided pertinent information to an influential academic blog, and worked to convince internal and external colleagues that the fate of the unit was far from sealed. Expanding on this last action, Dr. Xavier recounted the tone of his electronic exchanges:

Whenever somebody wrote to me and said, “Oh, gee, I’m so sad to see them eliminate the [unit],” I’d write back and say, “It hasn’t been decided yet. Please write a letter to our president, our dean and the [governing body].”

Determined not to be bothered by something “so far down the road,” Dr. Xavier took solace in the tenets of his discipline. Engrossed in his spring [2011] semester teaching duties, Dr. Xavier began to re-read a foundational text he had assigned to his students. Written almost two centuries prior, this scholarly monograph instantiated a continuous cultural commentary as it related to his academic specialization. Reflecting on this pivotal moment, Dr. Xavier believed “it really helped me to read this book.” Pondering this change in perspective, Dr. Xavier summarized his feelings on the potential elimination of his unit:

I wasn’t even disappointed. There was a time when I first got here I used to be
disappointed about all these things. People didn’t consult me, decisions were made and just handed down. Now I’m not even disappointed ‘cause I know that’s the culture, that’s the American university culture, American state university culture or American state regional university culture (Dr. Xavier, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Dr. Parks

Otherwise occupied at an academic conference, Dr. Parks received an email from Dr. Smith confirming the news. The President had just released his initial budget reduction proposal, and Unit 1 was on the list. Though Dr. Parks had heard rumors to this effect nearly a month prior, the timing of the official release placed him in an awkward spotlight. As word of the proposed elimination circulated throughout the blogosphere, Dr. Parks took center stage at the scholarly convention. Commenting on his newfound notoriety, he recalled:

So how did I feel about it? Well in very short order at the convention, everybody at the conference was, “Oh my God, what’s happening at [Mountain University]? Is this true?” At the conference there was a resolution at the conference—this is within a couple days of the proposal—a resolution amongst the membership of the society to denounce it or to deplore it. And, you know, in very short order I was one of the two [people] at the conference from [Mountain University], “Oh those guys.” And everybody—but people really wanted to know what was going on…

Returning from his travels, Dr. Parks played an active role in the defense of his unit. In addition to blogging, Dr. Parks contacted related disciplinary associations and high-ranking Unit 1 alumni, many of whom happened to hold senior-level administrative positions at other institutions. Moreover, Dr. Parks also collected data on comparable units across the country, and co-authored a response to the Dean with respect to the proposed elimination of Unit 1. Asked to summarize this rebuttal, Dr. Parks replied:

…First of all that the metrics being used were inappropriate for our [unit] that has a much larger service obligation. It teaches a lot of—a much greater proportion of its classes to students outside of the [college]…you’re not taking cognizance of
what we do, especially what we do with respect to other colleges. And we’re not a small [unit] by comparison to other universities.

When I inquired as to the Dean’s reply, Dr. Parks remained silent; there was no response to his missive.

Forging ahead in the midst of his unit’s uncertain future, Dr. Parks conceded a noticeable change in his job performance. Articulating his split focus during the spring 2011 semester, Dr. Parks stated:

It was certainly a semester in which I was distracted. It did take away a bit from my teaching. It also slowed down some of my writing as I was both, you know, preparing defenses against the impending cuts and also obsessing over them a little bit. So it did slow down both teaching and research.

Furthermore, though the unit was ultimately spared from elimination, Dr. Parks experienced an attitudinal shift toward Mountain University. Echoing the sentiments of Dr. Smith, Dr. Parks articulated his position during the following exchange:

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**Dr. Parks**: I know that I do have less institutional loyalty.

**Interviewer**: How does that manifest itself? You know, how were you loyal before and now you’re not?

**Dr. Parks**: Just by the way I represent the institution. First and foremost to my colleagues in the discipline.

**Interviewer**: How did you used to represent it and how is it now?

**Dr. Parks**: You know, it was great to me. It was a great place to be. The institution is very supportive of my research. It funds my travel, blah, blah, blah. Now I’m a lot less of a booster. (Dr. Parks, personal communication, March 19, 2012).

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**Dr. Bradley**

As the sole breadwinner for his family, Dr. Bradley experienced “a lot of worry” during the proposed elimination. Though tenure had been recommended by the unit and the dean, it had yet to be approved by the system-wide governing body. Describing this all-important vote as “right in the middle” of the institutional tumult, Dr. Bradley recounted his observation of the assemblage:
At the [governing body] meeting during this time, one of the [board members] said, “Wait, maybe we should just table these tenure decisions until we have this budget thing sorted out.” And then some of the other [board members] said, “No, forget it. We can’t keep these people on the line like that.” So that was—that kinda got, basically, voted down or however you wanna put it. And they voted then to grant all the people who the various institutions had recommended to them for tenure—they granted them all tenure. So then I got tenure, not without a little extra anxiety though.

Though he was now a tenured faculty member, Dr. Bradley recalled his preoccupation during spring 2011:

So I would say yes, definitely that semester I didn’t really get anything done besides worrying about this problem and trying to coordinate this or that. Getting people to write letters and stuff like that. Trying to come up with arguments about how the data didn’t support the idea that our [unit] was the best choice to be eliminated and all this kind of thing.

While his research agenda was on “the back burner,” Dr. Bradley found that his teaching commitments provided him with an emotional outlet. Indeed, focusing on class preparation and paper grading allowed Dr. Bradley to uncover a valuable learning opportunity for the students majoring in this particular area of scholarship. Dr. Bradley described his unique assignment in the following manner:

To think about, as part of an academic exercise, to think about the nature and value of the discipline that they are studying. So in that sense it provided something of an educational opportunity. I think, you know, if you’re studying a certain discipline the society’s showing that it doesn’t value it. Well, what is the value of it and I asked them to think about that and discuss that.

Although this positive, classroom moment provided momentary catharsis, Dr. Bradley provided candid advice to students wishing to pursue graduate-level education:

I guess it’s not a change in kind; it’s more of a change in degree. Like are you sure that you’re willing to put up with this [the potential elimination of your unit] ‘cause this kinda stuff’s gonna happen in the future in other places too.

In a further illustration of this tumultuous time, Dr. Bradley expressed his dismay over disparaging remarks in the local press:
So obviously there’s supportive comments in the newspaper articles but I read a lot of these articles and I read a lot of the comments. And it’s kinda, you know, disheartening to be made out to feel like you’re some kind of parasite on the system. I don’t—I didn’t feel like I was a parasite on the system but that was one of the effects of floating these possibilities out there that ended up getting retracted. I felt like why do I wanna be—why do I wanna live in the place where a large amount of people feel like I’m stealing their money? That I’m like an academic welfare recipient of some kind. Why would I want—I don’t feel that that’s what I am, but that’s—if that’s how people feel about me in the community it doesn’t really make me wanna be a part of the community (Dr. Bradley, personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Strategic Uncertainty

As outlined in the Bordia et al. (2004) conceptual framework, the initial phase of individual uncertainty relates to organizational rationale. Simply stated, why has the organization decided to head in this particular direction? Guided by the theoretical components noted below, I aim to answer this very question.

Reasons for Organizational Change

As explicated at the beginning of this chapter, Mountain University faced a significant financial shortfall as a result of the Governor’s proposed 2011-2013 biennial budget for higher education (Governor, 2011). Recognizing the gravity of this reduction in state support, both the President and the Provost issued emails to the campus community detailing the seriousness of the situation. In a memorandum to the Deans, the Provost summarized Mountain University’s dire fiscal predicament:

As you are aware, the budget proposal for higher education funding currently before the state legislature reduces the [Mountain State] System of Higher Education budget an additional 29.1 percent in the next biennium (2011-2013). The [Mountain University] portion of this reduction is $47.5 million of our current state appropriation. This proposed cut comes on top of the $49.6 million that [Mountain University] has already reduced in the past three fiscal years. In short, should this proposal be adopted by the state legislature [Mountain University] will see a total reduction in its state support of almost $100 million over the five years leading up to June 30, 2013. Past cuts have generally spared Academic Affairs. Although academics make up approximately 75 percent of the
budget, we have taken only about 25 percent of the cuts. Unfortunately, we no longer have that option available to us; Academic Affairs will be required to absorb more of the cuts in the next biennium (Provost, February 15, 2011).

In a further contextualization of these figures, the President provided his take on this scenario, stating: “In my opinion, such a budget cut delivered by July 1, 2012, cannot be administered without a declaration of financial exigency” (President, February 15, 2012). Though the Mountain State System of Higher Education governing body ultimately refused to make this declaration, the mere possibility of financial exigency, coupled with the directives outlined by the President and Provost, colored Unit 1’s perceptions of organizational change.

*Planning and Future Direction of the Organization*

In addition to outlining the rationale for Mountain University’s budget crisis, the President and Provost provided financial targets and processual guidelines to the Deans in their mid-February emails. As such, the Provost explicated the following budget reduction philosophy:

Under this process each dean will be given a budget reduction target and asked to make recommendations regarding how this target will be met in each school and college. These recommendations are due no later than Friday, February 25. You should work closely with your executive committees to develop these recommendations. In making these proposals it is important to bear in mind that the central teaching and research mission of [Mountain University] should be protected as best as possible. To that extent, horizontal cuts should generally be avoided as they do nothing other than ensure the mediocrity of all programs. Now is the time that we must consider additional vertical cuts and the elimination of academic programs and departments that are not core to our mission (Provost, February 15, 2011).

Echoing the Provost’s sentiments, the President made the following declaration:

An administrative team will review the proposals and determine if there are additional efficiencies we can gain through major organizational changes that would reduce the cut impact on our teaching and research mission. The cuts will not be equally applied to all units, and the possibility of elimination or
condensation of colleges and schools will be considered along with departmental eliminations and reorganizations. Our highest consideration will be preserving our students’ education, the core strengths of our institution, and gaining every measure of efficiency we can find (President, February 15, 2011). [See Appendix F for the entirety of the institutional mission statement referenced by the Provost and President]

Though the organizational planning process advocated by the President and Provost referenced updated terminology, the strategy of institutional downsizing has remained rather consistent. Largely a choice between across-the-board (i.e. “horizontal”) or targeted (i.e. “vertical”) cutbacks, university administrators must decide which strategy or combination of strategies will guide the future direction of the institution. In describing the longstanding institutional preference for across-the-board reductions, Eckel (2003) provides the following explanation:

This approach causes less stress than strategic, targeted cuts because it does not require evaluative decisions among units difficult to compare or anyone to make unpopular decisions; those responsible for managing the change are more experienced with the processes to make across-the-board cuts, and, finally, the shared nature of university decision-making makes targeted cuts difficult (p.5-6).

While Mountain University had charted this course during previous budgetary crises, the executive administration believed that continued reliance on horizontal cuts would weaken the institution as a whole. As prefaced by administrative leadership, Mountain University would become “a smaller more focused institution” (President, March 30, 2011).

Heeding the charge of his superiors, the Dean of Unit 1 began to make the evaluative decisions necessary to meet the Provost’s February 25, 2011 timeframe. With only ten calendar days separating the directive from the deadline, the Dean had little time to prepare his response. To this end, the Dean and his staff assembled a report which
ranked each unit in the College; the report listed Unit 1 as “underperforming” (Dr. Xavier, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Meeting as a group to discuss this account, the members of Unit 1 reviewed the report for accuracy and appropriateness of inclusionary criteria, finding neither. When I asked members of Unit 1 to elaborate on the Dean’s collegiate ranking system, I received the following responses:

Dr. Xavier: “…we were penalized in part because of we don’t have any graduate students. The reason we don’t have graduate students is we don’t have a graduate program…It was based primarily on the number of majors. We didn’t have many majors (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Dr. Parks: “…the data they were using was a little dated, a little old. It didn’t keep track of for instance the number of double majors that we had. And it didn’t keep track of some relatively recent growth in the number of majors…What was not being recognized was the amount of off college teaching that we do. (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Though Unit 1 rebutted the perceived flaws in the ranking system, the truncated timeframe did not permit adequate revisions or faculty consultation. Questioned as to why the Dean submitted Unit 1 for inclusion on the initial March 8, 2011 cut list despite their data-driven protests, the faculty provided the following comments:

Dr. Smith: Well…why it’s on the list is a big big mystery all around, because there’s—there were several stages (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Dr. Bradley: So there are two answers, I guess, I have to that question. One is—the general reason is because of the low number of graduating degrees. That’s the general reason, but that’s not a complete explanation because there are other majors that weren’t on the list that had fewer majors, fewer graduates, a lower graduation rate. So why were we on that list? I don’t know. I can’t really say. (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Dr. Xavier: Yeah, because of the small number of majors. Probably some of the feeling was it would cause the least pain ‘cause we were a small [unit] and small majors, so they just chopped it off. Nobody knows (personal communication, February 23, 2012).
Dr. Parks: The dean was thrown into a lifeboat situation. Ok, and who’s going to be piggy? You know, who’s going to get tossed out of the lifeboat?...That’s the dollar figure. Yeah. I’m not saying that’s very creative but there you go and at least the dean is able to preserve all of his graduate programs (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Elaborating on this strategic ambiguity, Dr. Smith revealed an interesting interchange with the Dean:

They [the Deans] were required to make vertical cuts. Ok. So what the Dean had said is, “He was going to give them [the executive administration] the names of three departments.” And what the Dean said to us is, “They’re never going to take these, alright? But I’ve got to give them three names” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Provided this context, the members of Unit 1 speculated as to the real role of institutional data in the Dean’s decision-making process. Dr. Parks, in particular, had this to offer:

“You can generate metrics that can do whatever you want, well pretty much” (personal communication, March 19, 2012). Unconvinced that facts and figures had resulted in their potential elimination, a new theory gained credence amongst the faculty and the local press. As articulated by a prominent newspaper columnist:

The plan to eliminate [Mountain University’s] [Unit 1] is so preposterous, so right out of a “Simpsons” episode, that the cynic in me thinks it’s a devious – and ethically suspect! – plan to draw attention to the Draconian budget cuts proposed by [Mountain State Governor] (Coolican, 2011).

Augmenting this assertion, Drs. Smith, Xavier, and Bradley provided the following feedback:

I think uh…the upper administration was thinking both “Huh…this is gonna be really really bad p.r. (public relations) if we lose [Unit 1]. Legislatures don’t want that kind of bad p.r. for their state, so they won’t do that. So we’ll put [Unit 1] up there as a big target.” …So I think it was sort of a…part of a chicken game (Dr. Smith, personal communication, February 16, 2012).

We knew it was a possibility that this was just a political ploy, but there seemed to be some—there’s another fact—there seemed to be some reason to think the administration was trying to create the most drastic scenario they could to scare the legislature into not making cuts, so that was another consideration (Dr.
Xavier, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Okay. Right, so that was—that seemed to be a motivation that if we cut everything horizontally it’s gonna weaken everything in the university and no one’s gonna notice because the manner of the cuts is to just weaken everything. Whereas if you cut vertically and eliminate [units] that is something noticeable that you can just say in one sentence that we have to eliminate X, Y, Z, [units]. And that’s a sound byte you can use rather than saying we have to eliminate, you know, 10 percent or 20 percent of the budget from this—from everywhere. That that’s gonna have all these little effects that aren’t as easy to articulate (Dr. Bradley, personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Confused and angered by this perceived institutional strategy, concerned citizens and academicians pushed back on the proposed elimination. Referencing Mountain University’s plan to cut Unit 1, local resident Rose Rhine made the following economic analogy: “I am astounded that our officials are so ignorant that one of the first things they would propose to cut is the exact thing that [Mountain State], indeed the entire nation, needs most to fend off this spiral” (Rhine, April 4, 2011). In addition to macro-level arguments, outside scholars pinpointed underlying flaws in this peculiar proposal. In an email to the President, Provost, and Dean, the executive director of Unit 1’s national professional association provided arguments based on principle and practicality, stating: “Eliminating [Unit 1] would be inconsistent with [Mountain University’s] Mission Statement.” Furthermore, Unit 1 is a “low overhead discipline,” which instills “the kind of skills most desired by employers.” Moreover, “one thing that is relatively unique about [Unit 1] is that total [Unit 1] enrollments are typically quite high. This is in large measure because students recognize that certain courses in [Unit 1] strongly augment their other major courses” (Unit 1 National Association Executive Director, personal communication, March 10, 2011).
Though Dr. Smith lamented that “some of the people who I think would have helped us and should have helped us didn’t give us much help, because they all said “this is just a bluff,” (personal communication, February 16, 2012), significant opposition did occur from within the institution. In a strongly worded letter to the Mountain University Faculty Senate at-large, members of the General Education Committee (GEC) argued against the proposed reform of undergraduate general education requirements during this critical juncture. As advanced by eight of the nine voting members of the GEC:

The recently proposed cuts, which are themselves subject to change, make the timeline issues as discussed in our March 4th report even more problematic. Specifically, the university is proposing eliminating [Unit 1], among others, and making significant reorganizations of major academic units. Since no final decision will be made on these issues until at least July 2011, it seems to us impossible to determine which courses will be available for inclusion in the core, which units will offer them, and who must approve new courses and curricula within these new units…The GEC asserts that the only thing that separates a good General Education core from a bad one is purposeful and attentive appraisal of both the content of the requirements, and the means by which students satisfy those requirements (Mountain University Faculty Senate GEC, personal communication, March 21, 2011).

Perhaps sensing the unease generated by the March 8, 2011 budget reduction list, the chair of the Faculty Senate soon called a special meeting to discuss anticipated cuts and proposed unitary closures (Mountain University Faculty Senate Chair, personal communication, March 24, 2011). In addition to the executive administration, several deans, and the entirety of the Faculty Senate, one hundred plus people filed into the Student Union ballroom to hear the President speak on this important matter. Stressing his commitment to campus bylaws and faculty consultation, the President emphasized that “everything was based on predictions” and that a firm budget was not yet available. Moreover, there were no satisfying set of quantitative metrics available to guide these
cuts. However, the President did recognize the stress caused by this situation, and offered the following explanation:

Budget cutting is a slow-moving form of post-traumatic stress disorder. There is almost nothing I can do to alleviate your anxiety. We need to eliminate some of the cafeteria selection on the menu (S. Donoff, personal observation of Faculty Senate meeting, March 29, 2011).

Following the President’s exposition, several members of the Faculty Senate and faculty at-large stepped forward to provide commentary on the elimination process. Though many individuals plead the case for their particular unit, two consistent themes reverberated throughout this institutional discourse. Challenging the President’s professed commitment to shared governance, faculty stressed the need for consultation and data-driven decision-making in the exercise of reshaping Mountain University. Reinforcing these claims, a member of Unit 1 (who declined to be interviewed for this study) protested the strategy of vertical cuts as damaging to the reputation and educational quality of the institution, and demanded that the President provide a solid rationale for the elimination process. Moreover, several faculty members from other units urged organizational realignment, reassignment of tenured faculty, and the discontinuance of a hotly contested new Ph.D. program as proposed alternatives to the March 8th plan (S. Donoff, personal observation of Faculty Senate meeting, March 29, 2011).

In an email to the campus community the following morning, the President announced a revised proposal which contained approximately $3.3 million in additional cuts. Prompted by the legislative finance committee to provide cuts equal to the Governor’s proposed budget, the President noted that he received this mandate on March
Elaborating on this proposal, the President stated:

Clearly the short timeframe for submission of the additional cuts precluded meaningful consultation, although they have been discussed with Academic Council and Cabinet and Faculty Senate leadership. The additional cuts included some additional subprogram elimination and an estimate of cost savings from potential college and university level reorganization…I have been asked repeatedly what principles were used to guide these cuts. I would like to remind everyone that we aren’t aware of any other institution that has faced cuts of this magnitude over such a short period of time. We are in uncharted territory. We can no longer sustain the diversity of programs we have with the resources we receive; thus we need to reorganize in each college and across the university to focus on our core academic and research mission…We also have to consider that we cannot significantly decrease enrollment revenue flow without driving further cuts (President, March 30, 2011).

While the President’s reference to preserving Mountain University’s mission is consistent with his February 15 letter to the campus, his interjection of concerns over enrollment revenue presaged a new strategic component. While not explicitly stated in his next email, this consideration was likely imparted privately to the Deans. Addressing this next phase of academic attrition, the President opined:

Last month I released a list of possible program and department eliminations. The list, put together very quickly to meet the [governing body’s] demand for detailed cuts, has damaged morale and created an incredible amount of anxiety on our campus. Please know that this proposal was preliminary and by no means final. Now a more orderly analysis and process will take place, and you need to be involved in it. I have asked all the deans to consult with faculty and staff to get your best ideas about how we can meet budget cut targets for your unit. Each college needs to engage in a thoughtful and thorough discussion about how we can sustain our core mission and serve our students in light of limited resources. After consulting with you, the deans will submit revised plans to the provost, who will then review them in collaboration with the Faculty Advisory Committee. We will fine tune the plans created in consultation with the faculty and have them ready for full consideration in mid-May. I am deeply concerned about the colleagues and programs we will lose because budget cuts are inevitable, and I will do everything in my power to honor tenure whenever I can. I will work collaboratively with the Faculty Advisory Committee to preserve as many positions as possible (President, April 8, 2011).
Including the aforementioned assertions, the institutional strategy now consisted of the following elements: preservation of Mountain University’s academic and research mission, maintaining enrollment revenue, honoring tenure, and protecting positions.

Though the President publicly issued his directive to the Deans on April 8, it is apparent that the Dean of Unit 1 had revised his proposal prior to this date. At a college-wide meeting on April 5, the Dean announced a new plan which preserved Unit 1, with the exception of its non-tenured faculty members. Moreover, those non-tenured individuals would have until July 1, 2011 to obtain tenure, or else they would be terminated on June 30, 2012. In an email to college which was subsequently obtained by the press, the Dean iterated that “the central rationale is to have as slight an impact on student progress toward degrees as possible” (Corbin, 2011).

However, members of the public and Unit 1 challenged the Dean’s claim, and the lack of consultation involved in achieving this revised proposal. In an internet comment posted in response to the Corbin article, local resident Gina Sully offered the following perspective:

The elimination of tenure-track faculty seems to me to be a move in the direction of eliminating full-time faculty altogether and having as many classes as possible taught by people who won’t receive any kind of benefits package. That’s a good move (in case you can’t hear the dripping, that’s sarcasm). Part-time instructors have to teach 10 classes a year to make $25,000—without benefits. Yep. That’ll bring the best faculty in the country to teach here (Sully, 2011).

Commenting on the Dean’s unilateral decision-making process, members of Unit 1 provided the following criticisms:

Dr. Xavier: “The whole budget thing was handled by the administration with no consultation of faculty, as far as I can tell” (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Dr. Bradley: “We got off the list not because they got more money, but for some other
reason. So we were on the list and then off the list” (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Dr. Smith: “The big sort of last plan was the junior faculty were going to get cut. And the Dean kind of making noises like that he didn’t think that was going to happen, but I was like “I don’t care what you think.” It’s got…I mean, “I want in writing, I want to know…” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Covering this change in strategic direction, student newspaper columnist Haley Etchison pointed out the disparity among the President’s March 30th elimination proposal, the Dean’s announcement of April 5th, and the President’s April 8th email to the campus community. Commenting on this series of events, Etchison reported:

The [March 30] document, as presented to the [governing body], contains the recommendation to eliminate [Unit 1], but since the [college] released a new plan on Tuesday [April 5] detailing faculty reductions in place of that cut, [the president’s] plan in likely to be amended. [A governing body member] attested that he has received more communications asking for the preservation of [Unit 1] than making any other request. [The Mountain University president] pointed out that for one area to be saved, another has to be put in danger. “Every time I take one program off the table, I have to put a program on the table,” he said. But, he said that any administrative proposal for cuts must have “grassroots” support from the faculty of the university in order to be effective and fair (Etchison, 2011).

A pivotal piece of journalism, Etchison’s account raises additional questions as to the timing of and motivation behind this weeklong series of executive communications. At a special meeting on April 8th, the Mountain State System of Higher Education governing body questioned the President of Mountain University about his March 30th budget reduction plan. Admitting that the governing body “did not have the background information or depth of knowledge in cutting programs,” a member of this body “asked if there was a way to preserve the course offerings in [Unit 1].” In response, the President noted, “they are reviewing the process right now” (Governing body, 2011).
Attributing this change in course to their letter-writing campaign, the members of

Unit 1 discussed the mounting pressure on Mountain University administration:

Dr. Smith: “Yeah, he [Mountain University President] keeps getting all these letters
saying, you know, “What’s wrong out there? Are you gonna do that
[eliminate Unit 1]? He mentioned in um some talks that, you know, uh…
some speeches he made about that he didn’t want to get another national
black eye” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Dr. Bradley: “And it wasn’t so much because of that letter [a letter from Unit 1 to the
Dean], I think, so much as external letters from the academic community
saying that it would be a big mistake to eliminate [Unit 1]” (personal
communication, March 22, 2012).

Dr. Parks: “Of course, from within our field, it turns out that a lot of our…a lot of
people in [Unit 1] are well connected with higher administrators at other
universities and so we tapped our contacts there. Basically telling—we
contacted those folks in particular to talk to the higher administration here
at [Mountain University] to basically make it clear that if—that the
provost and the president of [Mountain University] did not want to be
known as the provost and president that killed [Unit 1] at [Mountain
University]. That basically if they wanted to advance their career any
further that it would not be in their interests to be known as the president
or the provost that did anything to [Unit 1]” (personal communication,
March 19, 2012).

Provided the inconsistency among the March 30th elimination proposal, April 5th
collegiate announcement, and the President’s April 8th governing body testimony, it is
apparent that March 30th-April 8th was a decisive week for Unit 1. Saved from outright
elimination, Unit 1’s non-tenured faculty lines were nonetheless featured in the May 3rd
and June 8th budget reduction proposals (Mountain University, 2011; President, 2011).

Interpreting this change in direction, members of Unit 1 offered the following:

Dr. Smith: “This went through several stages—right, as you know—lots and lots of
stages—and there were different proposals…and it never really completely
felt over until like, the next September [2011]. Right? I mean, even over the
summer it wasn’t completely clear, right, what was going to happen”
(personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Dr. Bradley: “There were multiple like “Here’s the first list, but this is only—this is only
the plan A. This is the first iteration of our attempt to come up with a budget.” So it was never the case that the legislature gave us this amount of money and here’s the [Mountain University] budget. It was like “Here’s our first pass and that included [Unit 1] on the list.” Then in the later pass it didn’t include [Unit 1] on the list and that was—that came much later. So yeah, there was kind of a lack of transparency and clarity as far as what the university’s position was about what cuts were gonna be made” (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Dr. Xavier: “I think that could summarize a lot of the controversy in academia—most people are used to dealing with necessary truths. A good administrative position, they have to deal with contingent truths and they can’t handle it” (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

In a further elaboration of these aforementioned constructs, the following section will detail significant occurrences which impacted the short-term viability of Mountain University and Unit 1.

**Organizational Sustainability**

Throughout the academic summer of 2011, a series of fortuitous events provided Mountain University with additional, unexpected sources of funding. On May 2, 2011, the Mountain State Economic Forum revised its December 1, 2010 forecast on future state revenue, allocating an additional $274 million for public expenditures (Mountain State Economic Forum, 2011). Charged with allocating these additional funds, the Governor pledged “that the $274 million increase will go directly to public education” (Spillman, 2011). Taking “public education” to mean K-12 education, the Governor disproportionately allocated only $20 million to the Mountain State System of Higher Education, with the remainder slated for compulsory schooling (Rindels, 2011).

Meanwhile, on May 9, 2011, the President announced the Tenured Faculty Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (TFVSIP), which offered a one-time, lump sum buyout of 150% of a tenured faculty member’s employment contract, contingent upon
leaving the institution by June 30, 2011. As iterated by the President, “the goal of this program is to offer a voluntary incentive buy-out option to help limit the need for terminating tenured faculty. In short, the more tenured faculty who take this buy-out option, the fewer other tenured faculty we will be forced to terminate” (President, personal communication, May 9, 2011). Applications for the TFVSIP buy-out were due on May 23, 2011, providing a two-week decision window.

However, just three days after the TFVSIP application due-date, the Mountain State Supreme Court issued a pivotal judicial opinion. Radically augmenting the additional $20 million allocation to the Mountain State System of Higher Education, this ruling invalidated the legislature’s appropriation of $62 million in local fees for state general fund usage (Clean Water Coalition v. The M Resort, 2011). Compelled to amend his anti-tax stance, the Governor and the legislature came together “after five days of round-the-clock negotiations” to reach a budgetary compromise (Spillman & Vogel, 2011). Issued on June 1, the 2011-2013 budget included $620 million in taxes that were set to expire at the close of the 2009-2011 biennium, providing an infusion of funds for the Mountain State System of Higher Education. Speaking to the local press about the finalized budget, the President of Mountain University offered the following insight into his new strategy:

We exist in a global marketplace, and we compete for top faculty…If you don’t honor tenure, you get yourself in trouble…As far as program eliminations, a significant number will still occur, but they won’t occur by relieving tenured faculty of their positions (Lake, June 3, 2011).

Pressed by the same reporter as to which units would be eliminated, the President provided the following response: “[Mountain University President] did not say which departments would be cut. The deans of the various colleges are still finalizing details”
These “details,” outlined in a June 8th town hall meeting, provided budget reduction figures for each college, but did not specify which units would be eliminated (Mountain University, June 8, 2011). Though the President promised faculty consultation on this matter (S. Donoff, personal observation of town hall meeting, June 8, 2011), Mountain University transmitted this proposal to the governing body for approval at their June 16-17 meeting. In this budget reduction proposal, Mountain University committed to adding back several “programs and services, significantly improving the support for access and student success, as well a number of programs that directly support economic development” (Governing body, 2011). Though their non-tenured faculty lines remained a part of the budget reduction proposal, Unit 1 was listed among these “add backs.” However, the following caveat underscored the entirety of the plan:

Note: The reductions specified above represent current plans, but these could change based on many factors, including final cuts levels, action by the [governing body], faculty/staff departures, support required for students in impacted programs, the outcome of the curricular review process, the final outcome of academic reorganizations, etc. (Governing body, 2011).

While tuition increases and across-the-board salary reductions closed a portion of Mountain University’s $20 million budget gap (Lake, June 18, 2011), the buy-out incentive noted above provided additional funds for the cash-strapped institution. As such, forty-eight tenured faculty members accepted the TFVSIP package, freeing an additional $6.34 million for the preservation of remaining faculty members (Formoso, 2011; Mountain University, June 27, 2011). Addressing this influx of funds, the President opined that “the sacrifice made by tenured faculty accepting the TVSIP buyouts allowed us to save tenured and non-tenured positions and they deserve our thanks” (President, July 6, 2011). However, it was still unclear exactly who and what was
“saved” in this latest scenario. In an August 18th email to the campus community, Mountain University’s President updated his constituents:

As the summer winds down, I want to take a moment to welcome all of you back to campus and update you on what we have been working on over the summer. First, some of you have asked me when the budget cuts will be implemented. For all intents and purposes the budget cuts are done and I am happy to report that no tenured or tenure track faculty were terminated as a result of program elimination.

Clearly, several developments had occurred during the summer of 2011. With three months in between the June and September governing body meetings, it is evident that the administration worked to reconcile the elimination process, but with insufficient communication to the faculty-- the majority of which are not on-campus during the summer term. Though the plan referenced by the President would not be approved until the September 8th meeting of the governing body’s Business & Finance Committee, the decisions outlined in this report were made well in advance of this gathering (Governing Body, September 8, 2011). While Unit 1 ultimately retained its non-tenured lines, faculty members expressed concerns about institutional and organizational sustainability beyond the 2011-2013 biennium. Commenting on the future of Mountain University and their individual unit, Drs. Smith and Parks outlined their perspectives:

I think the university is in a weaker position, because, I mean, once you sort of uh cross the line and get people to consider, “Here’s one place to cut,” um…if you end up not, they can say the next time, “Well, you know, we didn’t last time, and you know, it was clear that was one of the things we could have done—let’s do that.” So, no, I don’t think the university…you know, in somewhat of a…you know, give the President’s really made a big big effort to make it not happen again, uh, that helps. But I think the fact that it came close before makes it weak (Dr. Smith, personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Well, it’s very clear that in the exercise of ranking departments that the dean for instance was willing to funnel resources into what were the perceived strengths of the college. In particular the perceived graduate strengths of the college and that is continuing. So for instance there are a number of new hires—a number of new senior hires that are being made. And they’re not being made in [Unit 1] it’s yet
more in [other units in the college]. And so this exercise of prioritizing programs turned out to pick winners and the process of ranking programs, I’m afraid, is a self perpetuating activity (Dr. Parks, personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Delving deeper into their stated concerns, the following section will detail the nature of the business environment and its perceived effects on continued organizational and unitary viability.

Nature of the Business Environment

As no organization exists in isolation from its external environment, it is important to analyze the effects of these extrinsic variables. As addressed in Chapter 2’s literature review, state institutions have suffered as a result of public disinvestment in higher education. While departmental/programmatic eliminations, salary reductions, and tuition increases are familiar budget reduction tactics, public universities also expend considerable energies on external revenue generation. Hoping to replace state funding with other stable funding streams, public institutions have increasingly turned to the business community—and Mountain University is no exception.

Underscoring the current public sentiment, Drs. Smith and Xavier provided the following synopses:

It’s long been recognized that some tasks are best coordinated by governments, and that to succeed in these efforts, governments have to raise revenue from citizens. Since colonial times, Americans have recognized that education is one of the things that taxpayers need to support (and those were some lean times!). Sadly, over the last several decades, Americans seem to have grown accustomed to thinking that they can have roads, schools, fire departments, and Medicare without fully paying for them. Now that such thinking has proven a fantasy, taxpayers should have responded with a sensible, “We should have been paying for these things, and perhaps we should start.” Instead they have clamored to cut spending—usually on things that don’t directly concern them or whose immediate benefits aren’t apparent (Dr. Smith, 2011).

That’s another problem that we have today in our society is that people are reluctant to spend money on public institutions. They don’t wanna spend money
on parks. You gotta pay. Parks used to be free. Now you gotta pay fees to get in. They don’t wanna spend money on education. The less money they spend the better. But, it’s very short sighted ‘cause public institutions benefit everyone (Dr. Xavier, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

In a telling exchange, Dr. Parks and I spoke about the particular shift in the Mountain State political climate:

Dr. Parks: I’m afraid—maybe this won’t happen next biennium but I’m afraid that the tactic of using the budget as a weapon, as it was the last biennium, that might recur. And if and when that recurs, we might be dangled over the fire.

Interviewer: That’s an interesting choice of words to say, “Use the budget as a weapon,” what do you mean by that?

Dr. Parks: That is precisely what one of the political parties has been doing in order to gain concessions in say in Wisconsin and Ohio. Gain concessions out of public employee unions. I know that we’re not—

Interviewer: You’re saying in general this is a tactic? Ok, it’s not just—

Dr. Parks: That is a tactic that’s being used over and over again. And it’s a relatively new tactic to [Mountain State] and it was very successful. And I’m afraid that might become the new normal. That would make our lives—my life, a lot less pleasant (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Succinctly reinforced by the leader of their professional association: “This makes the situation at [Mountain University] a particularly important threat to the discipline of [Unit 1] in a time when large numbers of universities face budgetary pressures from state government” (Unit 1 National Association Executive Director, personal communication, March 11, 2011).

Keenly aware of this shift in public priorities, the President has made efforts to strengthen Mountain University’s “town and gown” relations. A recent addition to the Mountain City chamber of commerce board of trustees (Velotta, 2011), the President has also courted the Mountain State Development Authority and other prominent local business leaders to assist with fundraising efforts. Speaking to the local press about the importance of these occupational ties, the President declared:

The folks in those groups are major decision makers in our state. Working with
them, bringing them to our campus, working collaboratively is really the key to
 gaining the kind of support that we need so we can establish a reasonable revenue
 flow that’s predictable and stable (Green, 2011).

However, securing a “predictable and stable” funding stream from private entities
is not without its own set of potential pitfalls. Indeed, as the business model becomes
instantiated in the academic psyche, it stands to diminish the role of the “public” in
higher education. Forced to compete with a growing for-profit sector, it is clear that
public institutions must adapt to an increasingly business-oriented marketplace.

Speaking to the [Mountain State] Business Journal about this phenomenon, University of
Phoenix representative Kathy Gamboa afforded the following explanation:

While the situation for public institutions is severe, Gamboa says University of
Phoenix’s biggest challenge right now is keeping up with the needs of the
community. “Being for-profit affords us the opportunity to move a little faster,”
she says. “An organization may come to us with an idea for a program, and we’re
able to work a little faster to put a program together.” She refers to the recent
development of a green and sustainable energy program, as well as an autism
certification program for teachers. “We try to fit into niches and help where we
can when we see programs being cut from the non-profit areas” (Santina, 2011).

In an attempt to provide the same level of service to the business community, the mayor
of Mountain City outlined a similar plan for Mountain University. In addition to his
ardent advocacy for the retention of Unit 1, the mayor espoused the following strategy:

[Mountain City mayor] also said the more “strategic alliances” that the city builds
with the university, the better off the community will be in terms of bringing in
new businesses and new jobs. [Mountain University President] is already
working to that end, he said. “If a business wants to come into our community,
and they happen to have a particular expertise as far as the work force is
concerned, they will actually design a course at the university, which will address
that,” [Mountain City mayor] said. “I think that’s pretty innovative…That’s a real
enticement for a business to have training at a university, which will be able to
have an educated work force provided to them” (Toplikar, 2011).

Summarizing the encroachment of private sector businesses into public higher education,

Dr. Xavier commented:
Really somewhat very clever. See, on the one hand, they all support public education, but on the other hand, they expect public educational institutions to train their employees for them. Why shouldn’t they train their own employees if that’s how they want? They’re externalizing some of their costs by expecting the public education to graduate students who are job ready (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Having utilized a variety of sources to underscore Unit 1’s strategic uncertainty, I will now rely solely on interview data to elucidate structural uncertainty.

**Structural Uncertainty**

In the Bordia et al. (2004) conceptual framework, the second, concomitant phase of individual uncertainty relates to organizational structure. Simply stated, what has changed in terms of the inner workings of the unit? Guided by the statements of Unit 1 faculty, I relate their answers to this question below.

*Reporting Structures*

Despite the specter of elimination, reporting structures in Unit 1 remained consistent during and after the budget reduction process. Refusing to condemn their chair for these unfortunate circumstances, Unit 1 retained its leadership and organizational structure in the wake of this potential elimination. Elaborating on this continuity, Dr. Bradley (personal communication, March 22, 2012) remarked:

> And there wasn’t blame, I don’t think. People weren’t saying—people didn’t think, for example, “Oh our chair, you know, he didn’t—it was his fault that we’re on the list ‘cause he didn’t do his job.” There wasn’t talk like that.

While Dr. Bradley’s assertion spoke to Unit 1’s continued confidence in their chair, my exchange with Dr. Xavier (personal communication, February 23, 2012) revealed the informal coupling of the faculty:

*Dr. Xavier:* We don’t have much formal organization in this department. Everything’s mucking along as far as I can see.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean? What’s “formal organization?”

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Dr. Xavier: Well, you know, roles and procedures and things like that. We don’t have those. We just meet once in a while.

With few formalities in place prior to the proposed elimination, Unit 1 chose to retain this structure at the unitary level. However, members of Unit 1 recognized the crucial role of the Dean in the elimination process, and accordingly changed their tactics in this reporting realm. Emphasizing this newfound advocacy, Dr. Parks (personal communication, March 19, 2012) explained:

Dr. Parks: We will be squeaking constantly and hopefully sometimes the squeaking wheel will get the oil, let’s hope.
Interviewer: How do you squeak?
Dr. Parks: Well, it’s the constant bid for positions or the reminder—it’s actually also the constantly reminding, especially the dean, what he does have in this [unit].

Hoping to prevent future inclusion on elimination lists, Unit 1 vocalized their concerns in a more concerted fashion. In a further elaboration of this recent awareness, Dr. Parks stated simply: “I think more of us now have a sense of the image we must portray to the rest of the college, to the dean, to the administration” (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Functionality of the Unit

While the members of Unit 1 observed only minor changes in reporting structures, the potential elimination had more noticeable effects on their collective functionality. Strikingly, the faculty members expressed a sincere sense of camaraderie as a result of the struggle to save their unit. Commenting on this unity, Drs. Smith, Parks, and Bradley noted the following:

Dr. Smith: The cohesion of the unit was sort of pretty good because it was… it was all… um… this is a battle, like, and we’re going to sort of fight this, and we’re sort of in this to win. It was not, there was never a kind of— when I’d talk to some people in other units, of course, there was a kind of fatalism about it. Um… that
was never us (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

*Dr. Parks:* In that sense what we’ve been through has brought some of us—well, it largely has brought the [unit] closer together (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

*Dr. Bradley:* If anything, it made us get along better. We saw more of each other in all of these meetings and so forth. And we didn’t really have big differences in opinion on what to do (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Piggybacking on the military imagery utilized by Dr. Smith, Dr. Parks referred to this solidarity as “a bunker mentality” (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Preoccupied with saving their unit, Dr. Smith indicated that his faculty’s research productivity declined precipitously during the spring of 2011. In conducting the faculty’s annual evaluations, Dr. Smith (personal communication, February 16, 2012) noted the following:

I imagine it *will* bounce back. But, I mean, you know, you build your research—is built on the research you did before. And just the whole spring [2011] was kind of lost doing this [dealing with the specter of budget cuts].

Quite interestingly, productivity actually increased in other aspects of the traditional triad. Commenting on this unusual pattern, Dr. Smith continued:

So productivity *really* fell off, um, in terms of *research* productivity. Teaching, people did as well…or better. Teaching, teaching did not fall off. I think people really felt like, “Alright, we’re on the edge, we’re in the spotlight, you know, we’re going to rise to the occasion.”

Mentioning that he received “the highest teaching evaluations I had in ten years” during the spring of 2011, Dr. Smith speculated as to the motivations of his faculty:

Yeah, and I mean, you know, they, you know, people telling you, “You guys aren’t worth anything.” We were like, “Yes we are. You know, this is really important.” And so, *everybody* did really good teaching, I think. So teaching, you might have thought teaching got worse, you know, would get worse, people saying, “I don’t care, they don’t care about us.” But no. Teaching got as good or better. But research productivity just fell off, because people were doing these other things.
Furthermore, Unit 1 faculty focused on expanding the scope of their services to students and the community, in the hopes of staving off future elimination proceedings. Discussing their shift in recruitment strategy, Dr. Bradley (personal communication, March 22, 2012) explained:

More focus on—in the lower division courses; the one-on-ones and so forth to make sure we have our best teachers there. And that they are telling them about the majors—about the major; thinking about different kind of versions of a minor or major that might be attractive to more students.

In addition to conceptualizing these new academic tracks, public promotion became a central tenet of Unit 1. Referring to the possibility of a new lecture series sponsored by a prominent local company, Dr. Parks stated: “I think there’s a greater sense of we need to be a little more involved in community outreach” (personal communication, March 19, 2012). Having discussed the effects of structural uncertainty on Unit 1, I will now turn to specific aspects of job-related uncertainty.

**Job-Related Uncertainty**

In the Bordia et al. (2004) conceptual framework, the final phase of individual uncertainty relates to provisions of employment. Simply stated, what has changed in terms of the job they were hired to do? Guided by the statements of Unit 1 faculty, I relate their answers to this question below.

**Job Security**

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of a potential elimination, members of Unit 1 expressed significant concerns regarding their continued employment at Mountain University. Voicing his concerns to the local press, a faculty member (who declined to be interviewed for this study) summarized his dire situation:
[A faculty member in Unit 1] says he likes [Mountain City] and the life he’s made for himself, but he will be forced to move away if he is fired. “I will have to try to find a job somewhere else,” he says. “I will have to declare personal bankruptcy, I will have to pack whatever I can fit into my car with my dog and go someplace where I can teach [in Unit 1’s discipline], because [this discipline] is my career. It’s what I do. In fact, it’s more than what I do—it’s who I am” (Totten, 2011).

Admitting that his faculty “were worried about getting fired,” Dr. Smith (personal communication, February 16, 2012) foreshadowed the anxiety of his colleagues.

Contemplating the potential of “forced retirement,” Dr. Xavier (personal communication, February 23, 2012) pondered alternative options:

One thing I did do the first day, I went home and I looked up the cost of living of [disciplinary units] in other cities. I was thinking maybe I’ll just visit…45 minutes on the internet just poking around to see if I could afford rents. I was trying to decide where—since I didn’t have a job here [at Mountain University]—where in the world, or mostly in the United States, where would I like to live, so I just tried different places.

Upon hearing of the proposed elimination while attending a disciplinary conference, Dr. Parks (personal communication, March 19, 2012) took this opportunity to announce his future candidacy:

Dr. Parks: I told them that so far the proposal was to eliminate [Unit 1] and they should look for my application next year.  
Interviewer: So that was your first thought, was try to get another job?  
Dr. Parks: Well that of course was—you have to prepare yourself against the worst case scenario.

Reinforcing his co-worker’s claims, Dr. Bradley succinctly stated: “They were willing to have my termination be part of this public plan. I didn’t feel valued; therefore it made me wanna go” (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

However, while the non-tenured individuals in Unit 1 certainly had cause for concern, one may wonder why Drs. Smith, Xavier, Parks, and Bradley—all tenured faculty members—were so distressed by the potential elimination. Commenting on the
employment protections at Mountain University, Dr. Xavier explained: “We don’t have tenure here, don’t you know that?” (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Checking into the legalities of this process, Dr. Smith (personal communication, February 16, 2012) recounted his disturbing discovery:

‘Cause one of the cases I wanted to make was, “you can’t do this.” Ok. And what it is we find out is “yeah you can.” I mean, there is not the legal protections everybody thinks there is. People really assume, “how can they fire tenured faculty?” There’s lots and lots of arcane detail about this, that you can study, but the long and short of it is…sure they can [fire tenured faculty]. There’s nothing of that sort in the contracts. And I mean, it’s really sort of up to a judge to decide if there are circumstances in which they can [fire tenured faculty]. There’s no clear law that says you can’t fire tenured faculty members…Yeah, it’s really really a custom that you don’t do this. But there’s *nothing* legally binding, anywhere, that has that.

Anticipating the potential legal challenges that might arise as a result of departmental/programmatic eliminations, the Mountain State system of higher education governing body proposed significant changes to their regulatory code. In a telling email to his institutional colleagues, a prominent member of the Faculty Senate offered his assessment of these revisions:

I am alarmed by the Code changes submitted to the Code Review Task Force. Among the more disturbing elements I note that

1. Administrators may carve out parts of departments for elimination.
2. No seniority protection is mandated in these Code changes.
3. [System] administrators may lay off tenured faculty in the absence of a declared financial exigency.
4. Curricular review may now include “adverse financial conditions” as sufficient cause to lay off a faculty member.

All Faculty need to know that the [governing body] is contemplating aggressive action that undermines tenure…This is a potentially destructive policy change that seemingly breaks tenure around any ill-defined fiscal crisis. Without a strong tenure model, the classic three-legged stool of academia is shattered. Academic freedom and shared governance will suffer (Mountain University Faculty Senator, personal communication, April 28, 2011).
Though the points referenced above were not incorporated into the system code as of the
time of publication, their very mention underscores the prevailing job security issues at
Mountain University, in aggregate, and in Unit 1, in particular.

*Promotion Opportunities*

Concerned with his potential for academic advancement at Mountain University,
Dr. Bradley contemplated his options at other institutions:

I’ve been thinking about alternatives. And while I was—while the [unit] was in
that timeframe when we were—looked like we were gonna be cut I did apply to
get another job. Now the way my discipline works, and maybe it’s the same
elsewhere, at that time of year there wasn’t really any permanent positions being
advertised or available. That’s just not how the market works. But I did apply and
get offered a job; a three year temporary job… (personal communication, March
22, 2012).

Explaining that “there are other sort of academic advantages too to be in a different place,
at a good university,” Dr. Bradley (personal communication, March 22, 2012) strongly
considered leaving his tenured position for a non-tenured post at a more prestigious
university. Though the Dean had promised to re-hire him upon completion of the three
year term, Dr. Bradley admitted that fiscal considerations ultimately held him back.

Explaining his rationale for remaining at Mountain University, Dr. Bradley stated:

The final deciding factor was, I guess, the financial uncertainty of going. How
much was it going to cost to move and the cost of living. They were offering me
more money than [Mountain University] offers me, but in a city with a high cost
of living. And so how does that—how can I—am I going to be able to afford
this? Is this gonna be a big risk for me? (personal communication, March 22,
2012).

In addition to Dr. Bradley’s more individualized concerns, Drs. Parks and Smith
worried about promoting the unit’s reputation amongst the academic community.

Emphasizing Unit 1’s scholarly prominence, Dr. Parks stated: “One of the shocking
things about the proposed elimination was that this was viewed as a desirable place to be
and as a place where very good [members of the discipline] had recently been attracted” (personal communication, March 19, 2012). However, Dr. Smith believed that the proposed elimination had jeopardized his ability to retain his faculty. Vocalizing his feelings of foreboding, Dr. Smith explained:

Um…everyone in the sort of trade publications comes out—they have lists of jobs, right—uh, I imagine a lot of people will sort of fantasize, say, “Uh…you know, that would be nice…maybe someday I’ll apply for something like that.” Now they’re like, “I think I will [apply for another job].” Right? You will have a much more likelihood of applying to other places, looking at other places, thinking about other places” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Moreover, recruitment of new faculty would prove challenging in the wake of the proposed elimination. As articulated by Dr. Parks:

Well, we have identified senior faculty that we might like to hire. For instance, when the president said, “Hey look, we want to make some high impact faculty hires at the senior level” we thought it was important for us to be in that game. And so we did identify one or two people. Just to make the case that, “Hey look, even after what has happened, we can still attract high quality faculty.” That we’re not crippled...But if we get into a so to speak bidding war with somebody, I am afraid we would lose out (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Changes to the Job Role

While the proposed elimination diminished opportunities for self and unitary promotion, Unit 1 faculty perceived substantial changes to their Mountain University working conditions. Specifically, Drs. Bradley and Xavier noted modifications to class sizes, and the attendant effects on instructional quality. In the following exchange, Dr. Bradley (personal communication, March 22, 2012) elaborated on his perceptions:

**Interviewer:** So you’ve noticed a workload increase?
**Dr. Bradley:** I think there’s a little bit more there, yeah. And then, also, just our classes have upped the cap and so I have to grade more papers and stuff.
**Interviewer:** Who upped the cap?
**Dr. Bradley:** The administration made the class sizes bigger.
**Interviewer:** What were they?
**Dr. Bradley:** They were more like 30 I think. I think they were 30 and then they
went up to like 36 maybe. That’s for a certain [introductory class]. And then for other classes that, for the majors, they also went up to 32. They had been lower maybe. Maybe 28 or something like that, I don’t remember.

Echoing Dr. Bradley’s sentiments, Dr. Xavier and I discussed the aforementioned phenomenon:

_Dr. Xavier:_ Well, as a response—not to this thing, but as a response to the budget crisis, the provost unilaterally increased the enrollments in our courses 20 percent without even talking to us. The university just said—they didn’t even tell us. They just did it. We noticed—

_Interviewer:_ You just showed up, you’re like, “Oh, my roster is huge.”

_Dr. Xavier:_ Yeah, I’d see my roster, it’s got 20 percent more students than before this happened. The chair doesn’t know. The dean knew. The provost did it unilaterally. See, that’s what I’m talking about. I’ve just been a factory worker.

_Interviewer:_ Okay. When you got this huge roster, what did you do? How did you react?

_Dr. Xavier:_ Could do nothing.

_Interviewer:_ How did you react though? How did you feel when you saw this? Tell me how. You see this roster and—

_Dr. Xavier:_ I felt disrespected. I mean, I’m a Ph.D. and a professional and somebody changes my working conditions unilaterally without even—did not talk to me about it, didn’t even inform me about it, just did it (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

In addition to feeling disempowered by the increase in class size, Drs. Bradley and Xavier noted its negative impact on student learning. Expanding on this point, Dr. Bradley noted:

I think there’s a point where the discussion becomes more difficult when you get to like 28, 30, over 30. More students are gonna sorta fall through the cracks as far as that aspect of the classroom experience (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

In a similar vein, Dr. Xavier made the following observation:

[Unit 1’s discipline] is just not something that people can learn, it’s something people do, and they need practice. The way to practice is through classroom discussion. If you have a bigger class, then people are more intimidated and you don’t get to know each other as well and it’s hard to make your own conversations (personal communication, February 23, 2012).
Compounding the stress from increased class sizes, Drs. Parks, Bradley, and Xavier commented on the lack of new hires and diminished university benefits. As articulated by the faculty:

There was one loss. Somebody—one of our visiting assistant professors did bail out and took a position elsewhere. Did bail out because of the budget situation and we didn’t get a replacement for that person (Dr. Parks, personal communication, March 19, 2012).

I mean we haven’t hired any new people and people have left which means there’s the same amount of work as far as the service side of things. Same amount of work distributed to fewer people (Dr. Bradley, personal communication, March 22, 2012).

I’ve been furloughed six days a year. Plus my salary was docked 2.5% or something. Then I got furloughed, which is another 2.5%. Six days a year I’m not supposed to work without pay [Laughter]. That’s loosey goosey. Of course I had no say about that either…The healthcare benefits are terrible. The out-of-pocket expenses if you’re in a family, if you have a family, it’s $7800 a year out-of-pocket expenses. That’s almost $8000 for healthcare. Most people find it’s very difficult to pay that. Benefits are going down (Dr. Xavier, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

In addition to his faculty’s striking commentary, Dr. Smith confided the new reality of his chairmanship, stating: “You know, there’s a little bit more sense that part of your job is to make sure they don’t eliminate you” (personal communication, February 16, 2012). Elaborating on this assertion, Dr. Smith remarked:

Um, the one thing I guess I am different is I’ve looked more toward outside funding than I ever would. This is just not something you learn about in grad school or think about when you’re thinking about doing [Unit 1’s discipline]—“Oh, how are you going to find people in the community who would donate?” Right? I do spend some time looking for them [donors] and trying to find them. And that—that’s different. And that’s probably the biggest change is seeing what I can do (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

As a companion to his fundraising efforts, Dr. Smith discussed new collaborations and pre-professional tracks as an integral part of his role as chair, explaining: “Now we’re really sort of pushing that, because it, you know, it will help us get more people
involved” (personal communication, February 16, 2012). In the following section, I will delve deeper into the specific actions of Dr. Smith, and how they impacted the faculty’s perception of the proposed elimination process.

**Effect of the Department Chair**

As the official, designated leader of an academic department (Leaming, 2007), the department chair is in a prime position to influence faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty. Using analytic induction and Berg’s (2007) concepts of manifest and latent messaging, I interpreted the actions of Unit 1’s department chair, Dr. Smith, below.

*Acquiring and Communicating Information*

Gathering and disseminating accurate information to affiliated faculty is a critical aspect of effective departmental leadership (Berdrow, 2010; Tucker, 1993). In this manner, Dr. Smith made a concerted effort to keep his faculty abreast of developments during the potential elimination. In addition to sending out “a state of the union message at the beginning of each semester” (Dr. Smith, personal communication, February 16, 2012), Dr. Smith made frequent use of electronic correspondence. Corroborating this claim, two members of the faculty recalled their initial awareness of the March 8th budget reduction proposal:

*Dr. Xavier:* “The chair sent out an email that said that we were gonna be eliminated” (personal communication, February 23, 2012).

*Dr. Parks:* “I got an email from the department chair saying, “Yep, we’re on the list” (personal communication, March 19, 2012).
In addition to communication via email, Dr. Smith called bi-weekly meetings to update his faculty—a decisive break from the usual monthly gathering. Describing this initial meeting, Dr. Bradley stated:

Well, I don’t remember the exact dates but it was in the spring of 2011. And the chair of [Unit 1] just called a meeting and said that there was some kind of budget cuts on the horizon and he was—there were kinda rumors that our [unit] was gonna be one of the [units cut]…after that first meeting there was no letter [to the administration], there was just the chair wanted to talk to the—he was gonna sorta verbally talk to the dean and people. I don’t know exactly who—to try to get more information and try to make some kind of a case [not to eliminate the unit] (personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Committed to clarity, transparency, and unity, Dr. Smith explained his rationale:

We were having more frequent [meetings]—because we, you know, there were always questions about who we were going to send letters to and why. And what our response would be to the Dean and what our response would be to the President. A lot of what I had to do was have people do nothing, at times when they wanted to do stuff, right? ‘Cause there were all kinds of counter-productive things people could have done, right? Various kinds of stuff that I think would not have helped (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Elaborating on his staunch avoidance of counter-productive activities, Dr. Smith succeeded in setting the departmental tone.

Setting the Tone

As the face of Unit 1, Dr. Smith assumed responsibility for delineating the departmental demeanor. Conscious of his faculty’s negative attitude toward the administration, Dr. Smith refocused their energies in a more positive manner. Describing this turnaround, Dr. Smith stated:

I mean, there were a lot of, uh, you know, angry feelings toward the Dean and the Provost and the President. And I was like, “No. They’re our buddies now. I mean, even though they’re doing this [putting us on the cut list], they have to be [our buddies]. They’re the only ones who can sort of save our bacon here” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).
A self-described “general,” Dr. Smith explicated his disposition, and its attendant effects on his faculty, as follows:

This is everything I’m going to do, and I’m absolutely bound and determined not to let this [the elimination of Unit 1] happen. And um, I had that attitude, and the faculty sort of picked up that attitude too. They weren’t gonna, sort of, let this happen. So it was a lot of an attitude of, “Ok, what can we do to stop this?” Um, they might have been a little more frustrated than me, ’cause I actually felt like I was in a position of doing stuff all the time. Right? So all day long, every day, I was sending emails, and fielding calls, and doing stuff like that (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Though Dr. Xavier described Dr. Smith as “totally panicked” and “just dithering away,” (personal communication, February 23, 2012) it was evident that he devoted considerable time and indefatigable effort into his departmental leadership. Encouraging his faculty to consider alternatives to Unit 1’s elimination, Dr. Smith included a critical caveat:

Like, I’d assign everybody, “How would we make up this dollar amount?” Right? “If it didn’t come from [Unit 1], where could it come from?” Without trashing other colleagues. “You can’t do that,” I said (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Furthermore, Dr. Smith took pains to prevent his faculty colleagues from further jeopardizing their precarious position. Describing a particular incident, Dr. Smith recalled:

Some students came to us with a bunch of signatures for the President that we, you know, we need to cease and desist this nonsense now. You know? Kind of like…and I was like, “No. Students should not be doing that. That will have no effect, one, and it’ll have a negative effect, two” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

In an attempt to shield Unit 1’s students from the potential elimination, Dr. Smith crafted an inclusive, multi-point plan to save his unit.
During the course of our conversation, Dr. Smith described the three-pronged strategy he developed to combat the elimination of Unit 1. As summarized by Dr. Smith (personal communication, February 16, 2012), this approach entailed:

1. Reasons why the university couldn’t legally eliminate Unit 1
2. Reasons why the university shouldn’t eliminate Unit 1
3. Alternative funding sources/cost saving measures that would generate revenue equal or greater to the amount that would be saved by eliminating Unit 1

While discussions with outside legal counsel undercut his first point (see pages 102-103 for more detailed information on the tenuous legal protections afforded by tenure), points two and three remained viable options. Choosing to focus on his second aim, Dr. Smith explained his rationale:

The main thing was kind of the p.r. (public relations)—don’t make it [the cut]. Whatever you do, don’t do this. Um…you will look like a silly university if this is the cut you take. And that was sort of the message that I wanted them to hear over and over again. And, I mean, I talked to people in the President’s Council. They said, “Yeah, he [the Mountain University president] keeps getting all these letters saying, “You know, what’s wrong out there? Are you gonna do that?” He [the Mountain University president] mentioned in um some talks that, you know, uh…some speeches that he made about that he didn’t want to get another national black eye, like we did, you know, threatening to cut [Unit 1]. Right? So, I mean, he’s hearing it from everybody. And I was making sure he heard from everyone (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

Furthermore, Dr. Smith recruited his faculty colleagues in the execution of this second point. Elaborating on this camaraderie, Dr. Smith stated:

So it was all going to be about, sort of, public pressure. And the public pressure was going to come from every quarter, sort of every conceivable quarter that it could. I mean, I uh…in department meetings, right? Um, I would say, “Like, ok, who do you know?” Right? And you know, one of my members would say, “Well, I once played golf with Alice Cooper.” And I’d say, “You have to call him” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).
Though the fulfillment of point number two soon overshadowed the third point, Dr. Smith did make an effort to explore this option. Describing cost-saving and revenue-generating possibilities, Dr. Smith remarked:

Don’t say, “Cut it from this, you know.” But uh, say it like, “Here are the things that, um…this certain…find out how much this electricity takes…and how much we’d save by not having this building on for this many hours.” So I’d assign people like, “Find out that.” And then um…we can put this in a kind of letter at some point, right? Or um, “Here’s who you could talk to about fundraising,” right? Or um, “I know that you know this person. Can you contact—like I know you were friends with this university president.” Like uh…or, you know, I would get people to give me lists of people they know. And then I would give them assignments of who to call and what to say, and stuff (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

As alluded to in the aforementioned statement, Dr. Smith recognized the importance of enlisting outside assistance in the fight to save Unit 1.

_Recruiting Outside Assistance_

Underscoring his personal philosophy of strength in numbers, Dr. Smith implored his faculty to alert anyone “in some kind of position of power” and get them to write in favor of saving Unit 1 (personal communication, February 16, 2012). In this vein, Dr. Smith answered over 400 emails, many of which were similar in tone, saying: “You know, we heard about you, is there anything we can do?” Replying to each one in turn, Dr. Smith said: “Yes, here’s something you can do. You know, here’s a list of these people to write” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

In his attempts “to convince legislators, administrators, and community members that eliminating [Unit 1] is a poor way to help solve the state budget crisis,” Dr. Smith alerted Unit 1’s national professional association to the unfortunate situation at Mountain University (Dr. Smith, 2011). Believing that all members of Unit 1’s discipline had a “vested interest” in preventing the elimination, Dr. Smith’s appeal unleashed a torrent of
correspondence from his colleagues across the country (Unit 1 National Association Executive Director, personal communication, March 10, 2011; Unit 1 Pacific Division Membership, personal communication, March 14, 2011). Looking closer to home, Dr. Smith also “tried to make sure that we had support from other units; that they would be able to speak up for us” (Dr. Bradley, personal communication, March 22, 2012). While the rationale for removing Unit 1 from the cut list was never fully explained, it is likely that Dr. Smith’s rallying cry for assistance contributed to the eventual salvation of Unit 1.

**Summary**

Bonded together by the shared phenomenon of potential elimination, the members of Unit 1 nonetheless acknowledged their unique experiences in dealing with this unforeseen situation. While the unit in its entirety only remained on the chopping block from March 8-May 3, 2011—a mere two months—the ramifications from this event reverberated well beyond this stated timeframe. Indeed, consequences of the proposed elimination included the development of a “general” in Dr. Smith and a “bunker mentality” in the rest of the unit. As such, the frequent use of military imagery in describing this traumatic process underscores an underlying war between Unit 1 and the Mountain University administration—a battle that could re-emerge during future budgetary crises. Provided the diminished institutional loyalty and research productivity that arose as a result of these proceedings, it appears that Unit 1 lost more than it gained, despite its obvious success in self-preservation. Turning to other faculty in a similar predicament, I will now explicate their attempts to save their unit.
Unit 2

Like their counterparts in Unit 1, faculty in Unit 2 struggled with the accompanying uncertainty of a potential elimination. Though they too were ultimately successful in self-preservation, members of Unit 2 experienced the budget reduction measures in a much different manner. Indeed, in the individual vignettes and departmental explications to follow, I discovered a unit torn apart, rather than brought together, by the process of advocating for their unit’s salvation. In keeping with the aforementioned case structure, I present profiles of the chair and each faculty member, followed by an analysis of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty. Finally, I conclude this section by examining the chair’s role in affecting faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties.

Dr. Hayes: Chair of Unit 2

The Dean spoke of “making sacrifices” as he informed Dr. Hayes of the potential elimination. Called to his office on March 7, 2011—a day prior to the release of the initial budget reduction proposal—Dr. Hayes was blindsided by this devastating announcement. Returning to his office, Dr. Hayes absorbed more bad news; his counterpart at a neighboring state institution had received a similar directive. Within the span of a few hours, Dr. Hayes’ entire world had changed; how could Mountain State contemplate the wholesale elimination of this discipline?

Placed in this unenviable position, Dr. Hayes immediately informed his faculty of this new reality, urging them to mobilize all of their available resources in support of Unit 2. Meanwhile, Dr. Hayes alerted Unit 2’s national association, hoping to spread the word throughout the disciplinary community. With the support of colleagues across the
country, Dr. Hayes and his faculty spearheaded a “huge grassroots undertaking” within Mountain University and the surrounding populace. Highlighting the scope of services provided by Unit 2, Dr. Hayes spoke with local media outlets and researched creative means of generating new sources of revenue.

Believing that you “don’t have to cause terror” in order to save money, Dr. Hayes worked tirelessly to develop a counter-proposal to the elimination of Unit 2. Examining tuition rates at nearby private institutions, Dr. Hayes recognized an untapped source of revenue. Rather than rely on the whims of the Mountain State legislature, why not create a self-sustaining unit? Utilizing his accounting and managerial skill sets, Dr. Hayes developed a differential tuition strategy with rates significantly below those of nearby private universities. Though he never received any formal, written notification of Unit 2’s salvation (only an informal conversation with the Dean), Dr. Hayes knew that this alternative tuition plan had made a significant impact. While he believes that there is less negativity now that the 2011-2013 budget process has concluded, Dr. Hayes still works to solidify Unit 2’s political connections in case of future fiscal crises (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

Dr. Miles

“He got you. He got you!” Walking around campus the day after the March 8th proposal, Dr. Miles could not escape the friendly taunts of his institutional colleagues. An outspoken critic of Mountain University, Dr. Miles believed that his most recent publication had thoroughly incensed the executive administration, resulting in Unit 2’s placement on “the official hit list.” Undeterred by this unfortunate development, Dr.
Miles recognized if “you’re gonna be a pain in the ass, you’re gonna pay the price.” But he was certainly not willing to concede defeat.

“Accustomed to conflict,” Dr. Miles “put together a whole bunch of students” as a means of organizing against the potential elimination. With a turnout of “something like 50, 60 students” at the initial meeting, Dr. Miles envisioned a letter-writing campaign which would generate “thousands of letters, literally thousands.” However, this bold vision never materialized, as “some of the students allowed their competitiveness to take over their good sense.” Lamenting this missed opportunity to “work it politically,” Dr. Miles commented:

You know, I couldn’t do it. It’s gotta all be worked through the students, so you have to teach students to perform appropriately in organization. That took weeks, but eventually she [the head of the student steering committee] handled it well. By that time, there were ten students who were working on the thing, and even they weren’t doing what they should’ve been doing.

Though disappointed by this setback, Dr. Miles knew the difficulty in rallying a community that is “actively hostile to education.” Perceiving Mountain University as “an expression of cultural values,” Dr. Miles offered the following explanation:

The community has a vocational sense of higher education, not an educational sense of higher education. That’s what starts to explain [Mountain University]. It’s almost designed to be weak. It doesn’t aspire to be strong. It’s never gonna get the money from the state.

A seasoned social advocate, Dr. Miles linked the decline of the labor movement to waning support for community institutions. Absent collective organization by and for “working folk,” societal systems will reflect other, more powerful inclinations.

Summarizing this “anti-intellectual” ethos, Dr. Miles reflected:

It’s almost antagonistic to the university when you listen to comments. The community votes down almost every single bond issue. They voted down for the police. They voted down for the libraries. You know all this. Right? What do
you expect from the university? (personal communication, February 24, 2012)

Dr. Frye

“It was a very weird time,” Dr. Frye recalled. And he could certainly judge, having worked at Mountain University for more than a decade. News of the proposed elimination had ushered in a new phase in his long academic career; the entire university was up in arms. Fortunately, Dr. Frye’s scholarly specialization had prepared him for this fight.

Recognizing a teachable moment in this intellectual milieu, Dr. Frye gave his students a civic-minded assignment—engage the community in support of Unit 2. Aiding this cause in an ancillary capacity, Dr. Frye personally wrote letters in support of his unit’s activities, and also served as an informational resource for the faculty. A regular at on-campus budget meetings, Dr. Frye frequently debriefed colleagues who were unable to attend. Steadfast in his belief that you “can’t cut what’s important to the community,” Dr. Frye often alluded to the practical, workforce-related need to retain Unit 2. Ultimately successful in achieving this aim, Dr. Frye appeared hopeful that “we are going into recovery now” and that the next budget will not be as devastating (personal communication, March 13, 2012).

Dr. Grant

“What could I do next that might help somewhat here?” Pondering his prospects, Dr. Grant described Unit 2 as “quite on our toes all during that period of several weeks or a couple of months.” While others wrote letters and organized student opposition, Dr. Grant took a different tack: “I just take my own initiatives and one of them was to start a discussion with the president.” Energized by conflict, Dr. Grant complemented this
executive dialogue with local media exposure, offering a compelling, statistically-based rationale for the retention of Unit 2.

Though he felt secure in his standing, Dr. Grant “was sad and more concerned for the younger faculty.” Without tenure, these junior colleagues would surely bear the brunt of the elimination, should it come to pass. A visible presence in the local community, Dr. Grant tapped into Unit 2’s extensive alumni network in a further contributory effort.

Describing his activities, Dr. Grant stated:

You know, when I go around the city, and if I step into the [related agency] department office or if I go around the [more economically depressed] area where those agencies are, I always run into graduates of [Unit 2]. So we wanted all of them to know what’s going on, you know, and gain their support here.

While he was “proud of [Unit 2], all of us for doing what we needed to do,” Dr. Grant was troubled by the administrative reaction to the fiscal shortfall. Summarizing his thinking, Dr. Grant opined:

I believe there’s always a moment of truth that comes along that you could say, “Oh, it’s too bad the budget crisis came along.” Well, but the question is, “How are you going to deal with it?” Let’s watch how you deal with this. And I think that it was dealt with rather incompetently here (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

**Strategic Uncertainty**

Like their colleagues in Unit 1, faculty in Unit 2 dealt with mounting uncertainty as it pertained to Mountain University’s strategic direction. Though a reduction in state support undoubtedly precipitated this chain of events, the members of Unit 2 wondered why their department appeared on the March 8th budget reduction proposal. In the sections below, I discuss their impressions of strategic uncertainty, and why they believe their unit was ultimately saved from elimination.
Reasons for Organizational Change

Shocked and dismayed by their proposed elimination, Dr. Hayes immediately requested an emergency meeting with the Provost to discuss this decision. Unable to attend, the Provost offered the following response:

[Dr. Hayes], unfortunately I am leaving first thing tomorrow for the [governing body] meeting in [Mountain State capital] and will be unavailable for the rest of the week. At the same time I have to tell you that a meeting is not going to be a particularly good use of my time or that of your faculty. I know the value of [Unit 2] just as I know the value of all of our programs. If the Governor’s recommended cuts come and the money is not there, then it’s not there. I would suggest instead that your faculty and students contact the Governor and Legislature since our fate is in their hands (Provost, personal communication to Dr. Hayes, March 8, 2011).

 Unsatisfied with the Provost’s explanation, Dr. Grant directed his inquiry to the Dean of Unit 2: “The president has said that his proposed cuts were based on the recommendations of the deans. Did you in fact recommend that [Unit 2] be eliminated?” (personal communication, March 21, 2011). In response, the Dean provided the following reply:

Please remember the President and the Provost both indicated that Deans would make recommendations and that they would modify those recommendations. No, I did not recommend the elimination of [Unit 2]. I recommended the elimination of some faculty positions in [Unit 2] based on a recommendation to do away with [a certain degree program in Unit 2]. I have indicated in a College meeting and at an Executive Committee meeting that I, as a Dean, must and will support those decisions. Any disagreements with the recommendations will be between myself and the Provost & President and you will not hear about it…I would suggest that you and your colleagues work at getting the legislature to understand how valuable [Unit 2] and the University are for the state. They need to restore funds. (Unit 2 Dean, personal communication, March 21, 2011)

Discontented with the Dean’s reply, Dr. Grant turned to the Mountain University President. In this regard, the President responded:

For starters I suggest you talk to [the Provost] and [the Dean], but in a nutshell, we are facing an unprecedented set of cuts, and we cannot afford to lose student enrollment or the cuts will be deeper. [Unit 2] is an expensive program and the
student production rate is low. Further, [Unit 2] has little impact on the rest of the educational activities of our students. That’s it in a nutshell. (President, personal communication, March 28, 2011).

Though Unit 2’s communications with the Provost, Dean, and President did not yield a straightforward response, all three individuals cited the legislative appropriations process as the key factor in the unit’s fate. However, while the legislature did “hold the purse strings,” it was the responsibility of the Mountain University administration to present a budget reduction proposal which met these legislative targets. Pushing back against their inclusion, faculty in Unit 2 questioned their elimination as it pertained to the planning and future direction of Mountain University.

**Planning and Future Direction of the Organization**

Like their colleagues in Unit 1, faculty in Unit 2 attempted to uncover the rationale for their proposed elimination. Corresponding with the Dean, Dr. Hayes challenged the appropriateness and accuracy of the metrics used to evaluate the productivity of each collegiate unit. In this manner, Dr. Hayes stated that “there is some speculation there is some inflation as to what counts as a true scholarly publication.” Furthermore, Dr. Hayes believed that the Dean’s “presentation was not helpful by way of presenting why programs were targeted for elimination, did not present essential information re: graduate FTE’s, external funding as particularly reflected by [Unit 2] (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 10, 2011). Indeed, of the $7.8 million in external funding received by the College, $5 million had been awarded to Unit 2 (Totten, 2011).

External funding aside, members of Unit 2 mentioned other points of departmental pride. A large unit with substantial undergraduate and graduate enrollment, Unit 2 seemed like an unlikely target for potential elimination. Furthermore, the diversity
of students and faculty in Unit 2 enhanced the institutional mission of Mountain University [see Appendix F]. Dismayed at these contradictory aims, Dr. Hayes brought these discrepancies to the attention of the Dean, stating: “I do believe information will be made public in the near future regarding the incredible disparities regarding the number of women/minority faculty who will be eliminated by such a move in the College” (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 10, 2011). As reinforced by Dr. Miles: “There’s no inherent weakness given [Mountain University] in this program. To the contrary, we get all sorts of points for diversity and all the rest” (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Confounded by the lack of concrete data, Dr. Grant summarized the feelings of his faculty colleagues:

What criteria were you using? It should be transparent what your cutting is, how it proceeds. And yet, if you don’t have any criteria, it’s not transparent. You’re just saying that such and such a program, such and such a department will be eliminated, but we don’t know how you got there. Because according to us, when we looked at any measure that was commonly tossed around at the university, scholarly productivity or enrollment in the program, whether it be our [undergraduate] program or the [graduate] program, we compared well. We compared very well with the rest of the university. So therefore, it became—it was a mystery. How do you choose such departments? (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Furthermore, the absence of explicit metrics invited “all kinds of speculation” as to why Unit 2 appeared on the chopping block (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 26, 2012). Like the members of Unit 1, several faculty in Unit 2 believed that the March 8th budget reduction proposal was perhaps a means by which to gain public support. As articulated by the faculty:

Dr. Hayes: Did the [Mountain University] administration decide on a “sky is falling” strategy in order to garner legislature support for funding the university? (personal communication, March 1, 2012)
Dr. Frye: The proposed eliminations threw the entire campus into a panic. I’m not sure if it was a purposeful panic, designed to get the community stirred up to support the university. (personal communication, March 13, 2012)

Dr. Miles: “What are the alternatives? Well, maybe you say what the President is trying to do is pick programs to eliminate that are gonna bring the community together in support of the university. Well, if that was true—he’d go after [some high profile professional programs], but he didn’t do that. They were held harmless.” (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

In addition to these persistent rumors, interviewed faculty also perceived a devaluation of their discipline and its attendant contributions to Mountain University. Concluding that Unit 2 was “on the periphery,” Dr. Frye acknowledged that scientific disciplines are deemed more rigorous and thus have greater prestige on campus (personal communication, March 13, 2012). Seconding this claim, Dr. Miles stated: “You know, they keep talking about stoking up the sciences here and the rest” (personal communication, February 24, 2012). Referring to his department as one of “the most devalued units” at Mountain University, Dr. Grant found it “difficult not to despair, not to give up on [Mountain State], and not to give in to overgeneralizations” (personal communication, March 9, 2011).

Moreover, Dr. Hayes found himself “frustrated and dismayed by the overall strategy of cutting and gutting this University” (personal communication, March 9, 2011). Believing that revenue diversification and creative thinking were the keys to financial solvency, Dr. Hayes declared that you “don’t have to cause terror” in order to save money (personal communication, March 1, 2012). Indeed, Dr. Hayes was not the only member of Unit 2 to consider alternative solutions. In an email to faculty colleagues, a member of Unit 2 (who declined to be interviewed for this study), offered the following fix:
As I said in the meeting with [the Dean], why aren’t we considering the elimination of the [entire College] as a viable resolution. Programs aren’t the only things that should be considered for elimination. We would pick up an immediate half-million dollar cost savings with the elimination of the Dean’s office. (Member of Unit 2, personal communication, March 8, 2011)

Furthermore, it appeared as though Mountain University was expending its limited funds on athletic facilities and technological enhancements, as opposed to restoring faculty salaries. Commenting on these “mixed messages,” Dr. Hayes wondered: Why is our priority building a stadium over rewarding faculty? Are we a research institution or a teaching institution? (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

As reinforced by Dr. Miles:

To build a great university is an extraordinarily expensive thing, and almost invariably, it arises in a very traditional way out of the sophistication of a community. The great universities in the world grew out of great urban centers of intellectual ferment, even when they weren’t in the cities like Oxford, which is a little bit north of London. Great universities are not pastoral pursuits (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Summarizing the uncertainty surrounding Mountain University’s future direction, Dr. Grant captured the moment as such:

This president put out, I mean I don’t know it was two, three or four proposals, get on my, you know, this long list. One differing from the previous one and the next one differing from the previous one. And so you put the university in a state of panic… (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

However, the Dean offered the following consolation: “Remember, the budget cuts listed are part of a process and as they say in hockey the game is not over until the fat lady sings” (Unit 2 Dean, personal communication, March 21, 2011). Indeed, the members of Unit 2 would take this suggestion to heart, taking pains to preserve their organizational sustainability.
Organizational Sustainability

Hamstrung by the political process, Mountain University administration cycled through a series of budgetary proposals designed to meet ever-changing funding targets. While the entirety of the institutional budget lay in legislative hands, Unit 2 found a powerful political ally waiting in their corner. Raised in the Mountain City community, this influential state senator recognized the invaluable contributions of Unit 2, and subsequently became their legislative “champion” (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 1, 2012). At a critical budget subcommittee hearing attending by the President, the Senator publically questioned Mountain University’s plan to eliminate Unit 2 (Ryan, 2011). In response, “the president reportedly said it would be re-reviewed” (Mountain University Faculty Senator, personal communication, March 22, 2011). Three days later, Dr. Hayes reported that the graduate program, and consequently, the entirety of Unit 2, had been spared elimination. The undergraduate program, however, was still in jeopardy (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 25, 2011).

While Dr. Hayes’ announcement was certainly a positive revelation, Dr. Grant remained skeptical of the executive administration. In an email to Dr. Hayes, Dr. Grant expressed his concerns:

In regard to the [graduate] program, we have received nothing in writing, there have been no explanations offered, the president has made no public announcement, and he has not officially retracted what is in writing in his proposed budget cuts statement, which is the most recent official word on the matter. I do not trust these statements and I do not like the hidden nature of the process (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 28, 2011).

Responding to a similar set of sentiments by another member of Unit 2 (who declined to be interviewed for this study), the President replied:

Putting the [graduate program] back cost another 12-15 of our faculty their
positions. All these choices are bitter, but if we are to survive, we can no longer be all things to all people, and we must keep as much tuition as we can to avoid even deeper cuts. My job is horrid, in that I have to try to find a way to lose 350 faculty and staff and still keep us functioning. There are no good alternatives left…It is a sad time, and we can only hope that our appeals will be heard and the cuts will not be as deep as the proposed executive budget. While I recognize the anger people feel to me, your efforts are better spent contacting your legislators.  (President, personal communication, March 28, 2011).

Though the President’s March 30th budget reduction proposal did in fact spare Unit 2’s graduate program from possible elimination (President Email, March 30, 2011), significant damage had already occurred to the department. Indeed, the mere mention of Unit 2’s potential demise set a chain of inopportune events in motion which adversely affected student enrollment. As articulated by Dr. Grant:

And so, he (the President) shouldn’t have made such a big deal out of the first proposal knowing it’s going to be changed down the line. But yet, on the basis of that first proposal, he said, “Well, I would advise students who are applying for the programs that are proposed to be cut, that they don’t apply for those programs.” So here is a classic blunder. I mean, it’s a sign of real incompetence on the part of a top administrator because you never go—knowing how many of these things work out in the end; you never kill the program before it’s actually officially killed. And this was what his comment was leading to, was going to do. If you say, “I’d advise our students not even to apply to this program,” well, then you’re going to kill the program, shut it down, even though it’s only in a proposal stage (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Speaking along these same lines, Dr. Hayes conceded that College advising center staff were encouraging students to choose another major. Extremely displeased with this counsel, Dr. Hayes found this to be counter-productive to efforts to save Unit 2 (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 1, 2012). Moreover, dwindling student enrollment would negatively impact local employers who depended on Unit 2’s programs to prepare their workforce (Dr. Frye, personal communication, March 13, 2012).

Recognizing the unintended consequences of preemptive proclamations, the members of Unit 2 also discussed the attendant effects of Mountain State’s anti-educational ideology.
**Nature of the Business Environment**

Echoing the sentiments of Unit 1 faculty, members of Unit 2 alluded to the sweeping changes effecting public higher education. Increasingly sensitive to industry demands in the wake of declining state support, Dr. Grant longed for the academia of yesteryear “when there were a lot of tenure-track positions and so forth in the states.”

Expounding on these sentiments, he asserted:

> You know, the university has been turned into a marketplace. So this is why they talk in terms of student productivity rates that we read before. You know, production, it’s like a—what is this a factory or a market? Students are considered consumers...This is all a private enterprise model for the university. And we have higher administrators who have gone along with all this leading, to me, to the destruction of a great university system in the United States. There’s been the withdrawal of public money, of state money. So I’ve taken to calling the public university as we used to call a place like [Mountain University], a public university, a charity university. We depend upon people, billionaires or multi-millionaires giving us charity, and they could give the charity for what they choose. They want to build up the business school, or they want to put another building on campus. You know, it’s no longer a public university. I tell my students how I went to a college that was one of the best in the country, and it was free. Free! It was truly a public college, [a college in the Northeast]. And nowadays, we don’t see the importance of having truly public universities (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Building on this concept, Dr. Miles offered a comparative assessment of the Mountain City populace:

> As a large metropolitan area, we’re the most underserved in higher education by an enormous amount. Buffalo, which is so much poorer than this community, has almost twice as many per capita higher education slots than this place. This is it in university education here, and yet it is such a deficient, underfunded thing. It’s underfunded by the public, and it’s enormously underfunded by the private sector (Dr. Miles, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Moreover, the potential elimination of Unit 2 would make Mountain City the only major metropolitan area in the United States without this particular disciplinary specialization. Indeed, as intimated by Dr. Frye, the closure of Unit 2 would force
interested students to seek schooling in a nearby state, for this would be the closest commuter option available to them (personal communication, March 13, 2012).

Speaking to a local media outlet, Dr. Grant repeated Dr. Frye’s assertion. When questioned as to what constitutes a “major city,” Dr. Grant retorted that “every city with over 500,000 population has at least one or more [options to study the discipline of Unit 2]…You know, how was this ever figured into the process here?” (personal communication, March 26, 2012). In the midst of this strategic uncertainty, the faculty of Unit 2 struggled to maintain their departmental cohesion, discussed in-depth in the following section.

Structural Uncertainty

Like their colleagues in Unit 1, faculty in Unit 2 dealt with changes in reporting structures and departmental functionality. However, the declarations of faculty members in this particular unit differed significantly from the statements of Unit 1. In the sections that follow, I contextualize Unit 2’s perceptions of structural uncertainty, providing a stark contrast to Unit 1.

Reporting Structures

While Unit 2 was similar to Unit 1 in that the faculty did not blame their chair, nor seek a new one, following the elimination experience, there is little congruence beyond these points. Compounding the specter of potential departmental elimination, Unit 2 also coped with the possibility of college-wide restructuring. As outlined by Dr. Hayes in an email to the faculty:

The president has also begun to make plans for possible re-organization of Colleges and programs. It seems that he plans to eliminate one college, and consolidating others. He did mention that [Unit 2] may be placed in [another unit]…[The College] may [be renamed] with a different configuration of
programs. None of this is set in stone but the beginning talking points of what may happen. Then again, nothing may happen (personal communication, March 25, 2011).

Though these structural changes had not come to pass by the time of publication, it should be noted that institutional reorganization is generally a gradual process—consistent with the overall pace of academic permutation (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007). As such, it is quite possible that the aforementioned plans (or a version of them) could still come to fruition.

Functionality of the Unit

In clear contrast to Unit 1, members of Unit 2 did not discuss downturns in their teaching, research, and service obligations. Indeed, despite persistently low morale, faculty “didn’t use this [situation] as an excuse” to shirk their scholarship (Dr. Haynes, personal communication, March 1, 2012). Reinforcing this claim, Dr. Miles spoke of finishing a book during this tumultuous time, and furthermore maintained his commitment to original lectures, stating: “I have the time to do it and I put a lot of effort into it” (personal communication, February 24, 2012). While this is not to imply that faculty in Unit 1 shirked their obligations, it is noteworthy that the proposed elimination did not affect Unit 2 faculty in a similar manner.

Moreover, faculty in Unit 2 did not exhibit the camaraderie characteristic of Unit 1.

1. As summarized by Dr. Hayes:

   This elimination process has pitted junior faculty against senior faculty. In some respects, junior faculty resent the more expensive senior faculty. The perspective of the junior faculty is that senior faculty placed our unit in the “expensive” category which then singled out our unit for elimination. Junior faculty resent making less, taking a pay cut, and possibly being the first to be fired while senior faculty are more cushioned from these financial blows (personal communication, March 1, 2012).
Correspondence obtained from a faculty member in Unit 2 indicated a high degree of animosity amongst faculty members. Responding to colleagues, a member of Unit 2 (who declined to be interviewed for this study), made the following statement:

This is not the time to turn the guns inward and send hurtful one-liner emails out to each other. We are [disciplinary affiliates of Unit 2]. This is a problem. We solve problems (Member of Unit 2, personal communication, March 8, 2011).

Several days later, another member of Unit 2 (who declined to be interviewed for this study) shared similar sentiments:

Again I ask that we please don’t make negative assumptions and public attacks on one another in that we are presently all in this boat together; although it seems that some of us have more to lose as folks start throwing people overboard from what they perceive as a sinking ship. But hopefully, the [disciplinary] principles, values, and skills that we teach students will be utilized with each other in the coming weeks, months, and hopefully years ahead. I also hope and ask everyone to keep up the good fight and uplift each other’s spirits because if we don’t we can’t expect others to join and stay in this battle with us (Member of Unit 2, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

While members of Unit 2 did praise Dr. Grant for his local media efforts, it was evident that these accolades were the exception, rather than the rule.

Perhaps a contributing factor in this intra-unit animosity, several faculty members mentioned the negative toll of hiring freezes on their collective functionality. Admitting that “we’re a skeleton of a faculty,” Dr. Frye noted that retirements and departures had forced them to replace full-timers with part-time instructors (PTIs). Furthermore, all of the PTIs had Master’s degrees, while Dr. Frye believed “that to have a good department, you need to have full-time Ph.D.s working” (personal communication, March 13, 2012). In addition, Dr. Grant expressed concerns over being “shorthanded” and “not permitted to hire” (personal communication, March 26, 2012). As explicated by Dr. Miles:

They owe us three faculty lines they’ve taken away from us over the years. Our undergraduate program is largely taught by part-timers here, you know that teach
a course here from the community, which is not a good thing, because it’s a very new community. There’s no depth of [Unit 2] scholars here. Many of our graduate courses are taught that way. We’ve got full-time junior faculty here, who will never be on a tenure-track. They don’t have doctorates. They don’t publish. No, the university owes us three full-time lines. If you wanna be fair about the thing, when you consider student-faculty ratios across the college, they owe us five lines, if not six (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Likewise, Dr. Hayes discussed the increase from twelve to sixteen PTIs as a double-edged sword. In summation:

In one sense, PTIs can be hired quickly (no search required), and they have real-world experience (currently practicing in the field). However, students may feel “short-changed” when they have so many PTI instructors in the program (as PTIs are not as accessible/available as full-time faculty). I believe there is a trend “toward hiring more transient-type faculty” at this institution, whether it is PTIs or visiting professors. PTIs and visiting professors cost less than full-time faculty, and they are more flexible in their assignments (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

Piggybacking on Dr. Hayes’ assertion, Dr. Frye also expressed anxiety over the effects of PTIs on student learning. Noting the importance of receiving theoretical knowledge, Dr. Frye believed that Unit 2 was doing a disservice to its students by employing so many part-timers. Moreover, students in Unit 2 had approached Dr. Frye with concerns about the considerable part-time composition of the department (personal communication, March 13, 2012).

In a related vein, Dr. Hayes perceived significant changes to the departmental support structure. Commenting that “this university is being run by students,” Dr. Hayes offered the following synopsis:

Before the budget crisis, I had two administrative assistants. As part of shared sacrifice in the college, I allowed one administrative assistant to take what I thought was a short-term assignment in another office which had no administrative support. It has since become apparent that this administrative assistant will not be returning to our unit. I have hired student workers to supplement our one remaining administrative assistant, but student workers have a limited skill set. As such, travel documentation, PTI hire paperwork, and other
basic administrative duties have not been completed in a timely fashion (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

As underscored by the aforementioned summary, unitary functionality extends beyond the faculty core, encompassing support staff and student workers. Though this situation may be more obvious to Dr. Hayes given his position as chair, the substitution of professional assistants for student workers is indeed a troubling trend—one worthy of further investigation.

**Job-Related Uncertainty**

Much like the faculty in Unit 1, members of Unit 2 experienced considerable employment-related changes both during and after the proposed elimination process. However, while Unit 1 faculty were skeptical about the university’s tenure protections, Unit 2 faculty were split as to their faith in this longstanding institutional tenet. Interestingly, both faculties expressed similar concerns regarding increased class sizes, as one of many unwelcome changes in working conditions. Detailed explications of these facets of job-related uncertainty appear below.

**Job Security**

Perhaps unable to sleep due to the shocking news of the potential elimination, Dr. Hayes spent the evening of March 7, 2011 emailing his faculty. Perturbed by their lack of response to his earlier communiqué, Dr. Hayes wondered whether “everyone is just updating their CVs & logging on to higheredjobs.com” (Dr. Hayes, personal communication, March 7, 2011). Borne out of frustration, Dr. Hayes’ comments underscored an interesting departmental dynamic. While the untenured faculty in Unit 2 certainly had cause for concern, and directly cited their lack of tenure as the main reason for not speaking to the press (Member of Unit 2, personal communication, March 11,
2011), there was a decisive split among the four tenured members of Unit 2 interviewed for this study.

Clearly confident in the protections of tenure, Dr. Miles (personal communication, February 24, 2012) made the following comments throughout the course of our interview:

I’m a very senior professor. I even think if they closed [Unit 2], they wouldn’t have been able to get rid of me. They would have put me in another department someplace…I’m protected…I’m very senior…Tenure’s a big deal. Being a full professor is, too…I can retire, or they’ll kill me.

Moreover, Dr. Grant offered the following assessment of his job-security:

Because, you know, at this point in my career, I’m pretty secure in terms of being a tenured full professor and having enough financial resources that I could resign or retire, as they say, anytime I want (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Conversely, Dr. Frye began searching for alternative employment almost immediately following the release of the March 8, 2011 cut list. Believing there is “no support for us in administration,” Dr. Frye admitted that “I don’t feel that secure staying here” (personal communication, March 13, 2012). Furthermore, Dr. Hayes conceded that “my phone was not filled with conciliatory messages from the power tower” following a press appearance by one of his faculty. After listening to these voicemails, Dr. Hayes informed the Dean that “I would be in my office today dusting off my cv,” but “never heard from him” (personal communication, March 15, 2011). Provided these conflicting perceptions of tenure, it is apparent that full-time faculty no longer feel confident in this once impervious protection.

Promotion Opportunities

Referring to merit pay distributions as “an issue of loyalty,” Dr. Miles lamented the institution’s promotional pay scale. Forthright in his criticism of Mountain
University, Dr. Miles interpreted his financial snubs as punishment for these critiques, stating:

It’s cost me over the years in merit pay. You know, I’ve written a lot…At the beginning, I got the full merit pay for the book, but not the last four books. I wrote a book with Rowan and Littlefield, who’s a hell of a publisher. They gave me $1500 for it, not $4500, which is the maximum in merit pay. $1500 is what you get for delivering a paper at a conference, but this was a sole-authored, scholarly monograph from a very good publisher, and they gave me $1500. Every year my merit was cut afterwards, so when I take a look at professors, who I know—who have done comparable, actually less than I’ve done, they’re making about $30,000 a year more than I, but it’s alright (personal communication, February 24, 2012).

A seasoned scholar, Dr. Miles could remember the university’s “golden age,” when merit pay was a given; up-and-coming professors were not so lucky. Indeed, in a powerful statement to the Mountain University president, an untenured individual pondered his academic future:

I honestly felt this was “my dream job” here at [Mountain University], now when I still reiterate this people literally laugh when I say this…I still am trying to have blind faith that things will work out. But when I read your statement, “[Unit 2] has little impact on the rest of the educational activities of our students.” what I felt this communicated was a de-valuing of my profession. Unless I interpreted this statement incorrectly this saddens me and makes me really question whether the reputation of our department will be so tarnished and disrespected in our own [Mountain University] community that my hopes of building a career here are not realistic (Member of Unit 2, personal communication, March 28, 2011).

While the aforementioned account is but one individual’s perspective, the profound sincerity of this message underscores the need to investigate the elimination phenomenon from both tenured and non-tenured standpoints.

Changes to the Job Role

Consistent with faculty in Unit 1, members of Unit 2 decried the one-sided implementation of increased class sizes. Affirming the new instructor/student ratio in undergraduate classes as 1:35 (was 1:25) and graduate classes as 1:15 (was 1:12), Dr.
Hayes acknowledged that Unit 2 has cut back on the number of admitted students in order to reduce these ratios (personal communication, March 1, 2012). Shocked at this turn of events, Dr. Grant offered the following situational assessment:

> I’ve had the highest numbers in my classes that I’ve ever had in my whole career. So, you know, what brought that on? How did that come about, the highest numbers? Maybe, I don’t know, maybe some people wanted to show efficiency, so instead of—for example, one of my courses should have been two sections and yet it was just one section so I had a much larger class than usual (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

Yet, like all academic changes, the increased class sizes did not occur in a vacuum. Indeed, Dr. Frye likened this growth to decreased productivity in other areas of the traditional triad. While Mountain University “claims to be a research university,” Dr. Frye believed that the 3/3 teaching load was far too heavy to produce substantial amounts of research (personal communication, March 13, 2012). Moreover, the teaching load was inconsistent amongst the various colleges, leading to an imbalance in research productivity across campus (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 26, 2012). As reinforced by Dr. Grant: “Well, for one thing, it’s a lot more work for me in grading assignments. I couldn’t get to any of my research last semester” (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

In addition to increased class sizes, new administrative assignments presented further challenges to the maintenance of a robust research agenda. As previously noted, Unit 2 had experienced a decrease in full-time faculty, an increase in part-time faculty, and a loss of administrative support staff. This confluence of events, coupled with the potential elimination, created a very unusual working environment for the department chair and faculty alike. As summarized by Dr. Hayes:

> If my administrative assistant is out of the office and our student workers are not
available, I have to spend time intercepting visitors at the reception desk. This is burdensome and takes time away from other duties I must perform as leader of this unit (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

Furthermore, the overreliance on PTIs prompted Dr. Hayes to institute a separate training manual/orientation process for transient faculty, due to their ever-increasing numbers (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

On top of these considerable changes, Dr. Hayes shouldered the responsibility for “unlearning the negative publicity” that had resulted from the potential elimination process. While the institution and the press advertised the dissolution of Unit 2, there was no reciprocal response to the department’s salvation. As such, Dr. Hayes and his faculty had to re-stimulate interest in the unit’s programs (personal communication, March 1, 2012). As buttressed by Dr. Grant:

Some of my colleagues tell me that there seems to be a perception out in the community amongst some people that, indeed, our [undergraduate] program has been shutdown, that there is no [undergraduate] program. So now, we have an [undergraduate] committee that’s trying to overcome this: sending out letters to [influential leaders] in [Mountain City], you know, so as to notify them, “Hey, our program is still here. It’s up and running” (personal communication, March 26, 2012).

As previously discussed, Unit 2’s graduate program received a reprieve merely three weeks after its inclusion on the March 8th cut list. Meanwhile, the status of its undergraduate program remained uncertain well into the summer and early fall of 2011. Appearing as part of the institutional budget reduction proposal at the June 16-17 governing body meeting, the undergraduate program faced an uncertain fate (Governing body, 2011). However, at the next governing body meeting, held from September 8-9, there was no mention of the undergraduate program elimination on the agenda (Governing body, 2011). Furthermore, Dr. Hayes acknowledged that he never received
any formal, written notification that the undergraduate program had been saved; an informal conversation with the Dean was deemed sufficient (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

**Effect of the Department Chair**

Much like Unit 1’s Dr. Smith, Dr. Hayes influenced his faculty’s perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty. Using analytic induction and Berg’s (2007) concepts of manifest and latent messaging, I interpreted the actions of Unit 2’s department chair below.

*Acquiring and Communicating Information*

Similar to Dr. Smith, Dr. Hayes expended considerable energies in the acquisition and communication of pertinent information. Upon speaking with the Dean and his counterpart at another state institution, Dr. Hayes immediately relayed this news to the Unit 2 faculty, offering his availability for individual consultation (personal communication, March 7, 2011). In addition, Dr. Hayes also attempted to convene a meeting with the Provost to discuss the potential elimination, though this gathering did not come to pass (personal communication, March 8, 2011). Furthermore, Dr. Hayes forwarded all supportive communications he received to his faculty colleagues, keeping them abreast of current developments (personal communications, March 15 & 17, 2011).

Moreover, Dr. Hayes also embraced faculty consultation prior to communicating with the Dean, offering them the ability to “review and make suggestions” on a department-wide productivity report (personal communication, March 21, 2011). Finally, upon hearing of their victory in preserving Unit 2’s graduate program, Dr. Hayes offered the following assessment: “I think we need to continue our efforts to save the
[undergraduate program], but be relieved that our graduate program will continue”
(personal communication, March 25, 2011). A powerful and exemplary communication,
Dr. Hayes took pains to set the tone in the department’s efforts to preserve its programs.

Setting the Tone

In his initial email to faculty colleagues, Dr. Hayes emphasized the importance of
determination during these tough times:

In the coming months we need to go about our business that we will still be here
for the years to come—however, we will need to take this threat seriously and
draw attention with the legislature, governor, and [governing body], as to the need
and importance of our program. All of us will need to work hard mobilizing such
support (personal communication, March 7, 2011).

Resolute in his commitment to these principles, Dr. Hayes involved and encouraged his
faculty to fulfill appropriate roles. Believing Dr. Grant to be “a great representative” for
Unit 2, Dr. Hayes presented him with the opportunity to partake in a high-profile media
event (personal communication, March 10, 2011). In addition to praising Dr. Grant for
his work on behalf of Unit 2, Dr. Hayes also extended accolades to other faculty for their
specific contributions, stating: “I want to personally thank those of you who have helped
focus the students and community” (personal communication, March 17, 2011).

However, while Dr. Hayes was quick to give credit where due, he also refused to tolerate
intra-unit criticism. When scuttlebutt emerged regarding Dr. Grant’s selection as a media
representative, Dr. Hayes stepped in to halt these “attacks,” refocusing the faculty as to
their collective purpose in preventing the elimination (personal communication, March
11, 2011).
Strategy Formulation

Like Dr. Smith, Dr. Hayes spent considerable amounts of time formulating a strategy to save Unit 2. Similar to his institutional colleague, Dr. Hayes recognized the utility of political connections, and worked to realize their full benefit. In addition to becoming point-person for press contacts, Dr. Hayes endeavored to gain “support within the business community” as well within the university (personal communication, March 11, 2011). In this manner, Dr. Hayes convened a new Unit 2 advisory board. Designed as a networking system, this fifteen-member panel included prominent alumni, local agency directors, and government relations personnel. Commenting on this approach, Dr. Hayes declared: “Having those political connections is not going to hurt us at all” (personal communication, March 1, 2012).

However, while the establishment of strong political ties remained a viable policy, Dr. Hayes’ principal tactic was to “make money for the University” (personal communication, March 9, 2011). As such, Dr. Hayes mapped “the internal logic of closing [Unit 2] and came up with all sorts of ways to save it” (Dr. Miles, personal communication, February 24, 2012). In contrast to Dr. Smith’s efforts to devise institutional cost savings in lieu of departmental elimination, Dr. Hayes reformulated Unit 2 as a revenue-generating dynamo. In an email to the Provost, Dr. Hayes proclaimed:

As a [unit], we have the lowest graduate tuition of the western states, and are even lower than [our in-state competitor]. If we are afforded the opportunity of establishing our own differential tuition, and also plan to offer online degree opportunities we would not need to rely on the legislature, its whims, and formula funding to have a robust, viable program with over 400 students (personal communication, March 9, 2011).

In a subsequent email to the Dean, Dr. Hayes made the following observation:
The reality is that many of our programs will have to follow such a course of action, given these times. I think we can serve as a successful model (personal communication, March 10, 2011).

As a result of diligently researched budgetary projections, Dr. Hayes was able to convince the Dean that this differential graduate tuition strategy “would allow us to continue the [undergraduate program] and bring in an additional $500,000-600,000 in revenue for the University” (personal communication, March 11, 2011). An example of the creative thinking espoused by Dr. Hayes, this successful strategy made a significant impact on the salvation of Unit 2.

*Recruiting Outside Assistance*

As mentioned in the previous section, Dr. Hayes recognized the value of having well-established political connections. In one of his first attempts to save Unit 2, Dr. Hayes “made the situation known to all the [Unit 2’s] in the country” (Dr. Grant, personal communication, March 26, 2012). Utilizing Unit 2’s national professional association listserv as a means of disseminating information, Dr. Hayes urged disciplinary affiliates to write to the President, Provost, and governing body members as to the importance of preserving Unit 2. Moreover, Dr. Hayes encouraged his faculty to “give me names of folks you think would be helpful. I need people who can “reach out” to others who can make things happen” (personal communication, March 11, 2011). Perceiving political pressure as paramount, Dr. Hayes’ expended considerable efforts to shield his unit through political activism—a trend that is likely to continue.

*Summary*

Though far from bound together by the shared phenomenon of potential elimination, the members of Unit 2 were nonetheless forthcoming in their perceptions of
the potential elimination. While the unit’s graduate program remained on the chopping block from March 8-May 30, 2011—a mere twenty-two days—the fight to preserve their undergraduate program continued well into the summer months. Listed as a proposed cut at the June 16-17th governing body meeting, the differential tuition policy proposal was not accepted until a later date, and was only conveyed to Dr. Hayes via an informal conversation. While the use of military imagery was not as pronounced in Unit 2 as it was in Unit 1, Dr. Hayes did reference his faculty’s fight against “this siege” (personal communication, March 11, 2011). Though members of Unit 2 made no mention of diminished institutional loyalty, it appeared as though intra-unit loyalties were strained as a result of the proposed elimination. Turning to other faculty in a very different predicament, I will now explicate their experiences in dealing with the outright elimination of their unit.

**Units 3 & 4**

In this section, I present five vignettes, each outlining the participant’s personal experiences with the 2011-2013 budget reduction process at Mountain University. Located in the same college, it would be redundant to expand upon strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties in separate sections. Therefore, I will begin with individual vignettes, followed by a combined discussion of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties. Upon completion of this objective, I will return to separately analyze the department chair effect in Units 3 and 4.

Though their units were ultimately eliminated, a strategic planning process foreshadowed this outcome. Implemented July 1, 2011, the Dean endorsed this no-department, single program structure as a way to eliminate scholarly “silos.” Shielded
from eliminating tenured faculty as a result of high numbers of collegiate TFVSIP participants, the Dean’s changes reflected a corporate vision of university governance. However, the elimination of a traditional academic configuration in favor of a business-like governance model engendered considerable structural uncertainty. Interviewed in the midst of this transition, I relate the faculty’s experiences with this change process below.

*Dr. Roberts-Chair of Unit 3*

But, you know, I make it work, because I believe in this college and I believe in this university. So I have to make it work. I make it work with enthusiasm. (personal communication, March 7, 2012)

With his exuberant personality and forward-thinking philosophy, Dr. Roberts embraced the sweeping changes to college and unit. Prompted by the appointment of a new, non-academic dean, these adjustments reflected the business model of private industry (Lake, 2011). Though the new dean did not hold a terminal degree, the President removed his interim status after a one-year probationary period. Announcing this appointment, the President declared:

The upward trajectory of the [college] has been so potent. The [college] has given their interim dean one of the most resounding endorsements of leadership that I have ever witnessed (Lister, 2011).

Clearly, Dr. Roberts numbered amongst the adherents. Viewing the college as “a partnership,” Dr. Roberts offered the following analogy:

It’s a partnership, the same as you’d have a legal practice, a medical practice, a bunch of physicians together, a bunch of lawyers, an engineering practice—it’s a partnership. You’ve got people—professionals, who are partners; so when you’re admitted to tenure, you become a partner. You don’t *buy* your way in the way you do in an accounting firm, but you buy it in with six years of blood, sweat, and tears to become a partner—so it’s sweat equity that makes you a partner—and you have responsibility when you become a partner (personal communication, March 7, 2012).
To Dr. Roberts, part of this responsibility included buying in to the new collegiate leadership model, despite differences in opinion between himself and the dean. Believing that the wellbeing of students transcended college and departmental politics, Dr. Roberts outlined his perception of the academician’s purpose:

The university to me, is the crucible of thought, of care, and of preparing future generations. The work we do—I really believe this—is some of the most important work on the planet; because if the human race is going to advance, and if we’re going to move to the omega point, whatever we think that is—it’s up to us to see to it that what happened in the past is linked to what happens in the future (personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Committed to this philosophy, Dr. Roberts encouraged his former faculty members to press “full speed ahead” in pursuit of this new agenda—a bold move in the face of such transformational change (personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Dr. James

At odds with the new Dean over changes to the college and the erosion of academic governance, Dr. James summarized his position: “I was for the old structure. I was for the department chairs” (personal communication, February 27, 2012). Employed at Mountain University for a considerable period of time, Dr. James had seen the college grow and flourish throughout the preceding decades. However, with this latest change in leadership, Dr. James perceived the new “corporate mentality” as an unwelcome academic encroachment. Indeed, Dr. James was not the only faculty member to express these concerns. Alluding to conversations with his colleagues, he offered the following assessment:

I really think now there’s a very strong, simmering discontent because of the associate and assistant administrators who are unilaterally making decisions without consulting with the faculty. That’s really gotten people—it’s this water cooler mentality. Around the water cooler they’re all fired up. It takes a lot to get
them to move on something but we’re getting close to the boiling point
(personal communication, February 27, 2012).

A precursor to this “boiling point,” Dr. James discussed his attempts to address
the “whispers” of departmental elimination with the Dean:

I can’t remember exactly but he made it sound like, “Well, we’re considering it.
There’ll be some changes. I’m not quite sure yet what it’ll be but the strategic
plan calls for us to change things.” Then, just before the meeting—like a couple
weeks before—we heard of the new structure he was going to propose at the
meeting (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Announced at a May 2011 faculty meeting, the Dean’s new department-less structure
would go into effect on July 1, 2011. Calling this pronouncement a “fait accompli,” Dr.
James lamented the appointments, proclamations, and re-votes that had replaced
traditional faculty elections, bylaws, and autonomous decision-making. Close to
retirement, Dr. James admitted that “if it got too bad I could just throw in the towel.” Too
tired to continue fighting against “those things I don’t agree with,” Dr. James decided “to
go along with it” in the interim (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Dr. Adams

Employed at Mountain University for nearly two decades, Dr. Adams had
experienced his fair share of institutional change. But this time was different. With a
new Dean, a new reporting structure, and the loss of significant numbers of colleagues,
Dr. Adams felt a heavy weight resting on his shoulders:

So the combined stress of all that has, you know, set morale and everything back
to where, you know, it’s been one of the most stressful times, you know, since
I’ve been here at the college and I’ve been here goin’ on [several] years now. It’s
starting, you know, just like the university saying, “Oh, the budget’s gonna get
better,” things like that; starting to see some light (personal communication, April
10, 2012).
Optimistic about the future but realistic about the present, Dr. Adams perceived a
decisive shift in administrative discretion as it pertained to this collegiate overhaul:

I’m finally getting to the job I should have had years ago [Laughter], but wasn’t
eligible because of the university rules for administrators having had Ph.D.’s and
having gotten tenure, which does make it personally very interesting then that
those rules apply to everybody, except for our dean [Laughter]. But, it is what it is
(personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Using humor to cope with an otherwise difficult situation, Dr. Adams discussed
the short-term effects of this new reporting structure during the following exchange:

Interviewer: Have the silos gone away? Is there more camaraderie in the college
with this new structure?
Dr. Adams: No.
Interviewer: Is there less or has it stayed the same?
Dr. Adams: It’s about the same, yeah, there’s pockets of the people that talk to
each other and hang out. There’s still lots of gossiping, lots of back fighting, lots
of who said what about what and that has not quite—it has not gone away. You
know, it’s starting to get a little better (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Despite entrenched loyalties and enmities, Dr. Adams did notice the Dean’s efforts to
gen er greater collegiate community. Recounting a recent visit to a newly opened
performing arts complex, Dr. Adams noted:

We had a faculty meeting down at the [performing arts complex] and we got to
take a tour and everybody got—you know, and that was just something nice to do
together and to talk about things. At the time, there was a few controversial
things [Laughter] he wanted to, you know, meet about, but you know, things like
that really help (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Eager to experience the progression of this new leadership model, Dr. Adams appeared
amenable to change—an important characteristic for an aspiring academic administrator.

Dr. Covey-Chair of Unit 4

Commenting on his brief tenure as leader of Unit 4, Dr. Covey made the
following declaration: “I was brought in to chair that department and to build a master’s
and a doctorate program as well as a graduate program. We barely got started when we
were eliminated.” Though he lamented the plans that never came to fruition, Dr. Covey was a “survivor” and not a defeatist. Outlining his position, he offered an evolutionary analogy: “I can mutate, migrate, or die. I’ll be honest with you I made a decision to embrace it.” Open to the new governance model, Dr. Covey believed “we’re stronger because we’re not fractured by departments. I think that moving to a single degree for this college was absolutely the right thing to do” (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Though many of his tenured colleagues disagreed with this assessment, Dr. Covey was more concerned with the fate of his students and non-tenured individuals. Describing the classroom demeanor during the institutional turmoil, Dr. Covey noted “the haters and attitudes from stress; giving up; their helplessness and anger…They felt like they were abandoned by the university.” Moreover, “it was our junior faculty I felt worst about because they really felt like they had just been thrown out. One day they’ve got a job, the next day they know they’ve got a year.” While he “felt a tremendous amount of pressure and frustration” during this time, these feelings paled in comparison to those facing imminent unemployment (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Characterizing the aftermath of institutional and collegiate upheaval as “a grieving process,” Dr. Covey acknowledged his ambivalence toward the minutia of academe:

Matter of fact, one of my buddies last night sent me an email…He says, “What department are you in?” I said, “I’m not. I just put down [the full name of the college].” That’s what my business card says. That’s what I’m doing (personal communication, February 22, 2012).
Identifying himself as “a round peg that’s been squared off,” Dr. Covey nonetheless discarded the “woe is me” attitude: “Too many people retire a place in anger. I won’t see that happen” (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

*Dr. Kingman*

Discussing the issue of institutional loyalty, Dr. Kingman decried the lack of “humanism” as it pertained to the budgetary changes sweeping Mountain University. For nearly twenty years, Dr. Kingman “gave this university everything I had…1000 percent to my classes, you know, served on committees on the college level.” Hedging against potential termination, Dr. Kingman signed up to claim the TFVSIP package, pulling back at the last possible moment. Though he ultimately remained at Mountain University, Dr. Kingman described this process as follows:

I went over there [to Human Resources], and I expected some—it was an emotional process to be looking at signing your papers to leave, especially since it hadn’t been a choice to leave. And the absence of any sensitivity to what the VSIP people might be going through, you know, nothing about “I’m really sorry you’re in this position where you had your unit eliminated or whatever.” It was so kind of mechanical and so non kind of humanistic and relational, I was very disappointed (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

While dismayed at his treatment by Human Resources, Dr. Kingman was even more disheartened by a lack of professional collegiality: “There were very few people from the administration, many of whom I’d known for a long time, or even from across campus that would just, you know, send an e-mail and say…“How are you holding up?” (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Despite these emotional setbacks, Dr. Kingman expressed “gratitude for what I do have in life.” Knowing “how lucky I am to have a job in this economic environment,” Dr.
Kingman believed “that every experience in life makes you wiser.” Expounding on this philosophical outlook, Dr. Kingman explained:

And every test, I just—it comes back to every test that I’m given, I just want to become a better person, having gone through it. And I think that I have been. You know, a certain level of acceptance—you know, you can’t determine what life gives you. All you can do is decide how you’re gonna respond to it (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Though he “would not wish what I went through on anybody,” Dr. Kingman found solace in this particular life experience:

I think that the best judgment of a situation is to use it to grow was a human being. Who are you on the other side of it? And, you know, I learned a lot of things I think were good for me to learn as a human being going through this process (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

**Strategic Uncertainty**

Engaged in faculty-driven strategic planning sessions in 2006 and 2009, these discussions had stalled due to a lack of scholarly consensus. Upon arrival at the college in the Fall of 2010, the new dean decided to restart the strategic planning process once more, in order to make “explicit the Vision, Values, Mission, Goals and Strategies of the College.” A framework for 2011-2015, this plan would “serve as a “road map” to guide and direct the major efforts of the College for the next three to five years” (Mountain University [Units 3 & 4] College, 2011). In the sections below, the faculty of Units 3 and 4 discuss the arrival of the new dean and the effects 2010-2011 strategic planning process.

**Reasons for Organizational Change**

From October 2010 through June 2011, the new Dean directed the efforts of the collegiate strategic planning process. As a means of gathering “broad and comprehensive feedback from all major stakeholders,” an outside facilitator gathered information from
“students, faculty, professional and clerical staff, advisory board members, alumni, industry leaders and other individuals and groups involved in the College.” Using “surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions,” the facilitator developed “an environmental scan examining political, economic, social and technology factors (PEST) and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)” (Mountain University [Units 3 & 4] College, 2011). The full text of the PEST and SWOT analyses appear as appendices H and I.

In addition to the aforementioned analytic tools, the strategic plan included goals and achievement strategies, each outlined in succession. The seven goals of the strategic plan were as follows:

1. Help students learn and grow through rigorous academics, relevant professional experiences and engaging social opportunities.
2. Support and enhance faculty/staff professional development, collaboration and performance.
3. Significantly increase resources to support and reward research, teaching and service.
4. Develop strong relationships and improve communications with the alumni, industry and community.
5. Enhance and expand facilities, resources and amenities to create a highly professional learning environment.
6. Establish a strong and sustainable financial structure to ensure stability and long term success.
7. Improve the organizational and operational effectiveness of the College.

(Mountain University [Units 3 & 4] College, 2011)

Two to four strategies followed each goal, with simple, bulleted points serving to guide faculty and administrative actions. Including appendices, the strategic plan totaled thirty-four pages, reading as more of a PowerPoint presentation than an academic narrative.

Commenting on the rationale for this undertaking, the faculty were fairly consistent in their understanding. Prompted by the Provost’s budget reduction directive, the Dean adhered to the collegiate mission:
Develop students into leaders of the [disciplinary] industry, contribute to the advancement of the profession and provide service to the community by having an outstanding faculty, challenging curriculum, innovative research, supportive culture and wide range of professional experiences; all in the context of one of the most exciting cities in the world (Mountain University [Units 3 & 4] College, 2011).

As substantiated by Dr. Kingman (personal communication, February 28, 2012):

The Dean was told he had to cut, I don’t know, $1 million, $1.5 million from the budget and that it was equivalent to about ten lines. At that point, he just looked for the faculty or the degree programs that weren’t central to the mission of the college, in his mind. That’s how the faculty were let go.

Focused on preserving the college’s essential functions, the Dean implemented business practices to achieve this end. As outlined in the following interchange, the Dean drew on his private sector training to lead the college:

*Interviewer*: Why do you think that all the departments were eliminated?

*Dr. Covey*: We got a new dean and he comes out of the corporate sector and he looked at this and he says, “This doesn’t make any sense.” What he was looking at it was from a corporate perspective and also from a [Mountain City] industry perspective. He said, “If I’m going to go out and I’m going to sell the college, I can’t sell it as four dispersed and disparate departments.” We had 10 or 11 degrees at that point; I lost count (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Furthermore, “He’s trying to make sure that we’re turning out a product—which is our students—that best serves the needs of the [disciplinary] industry and specifically looks at the [Mountain City] marketplace” (Dr. Covey, personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Acting on institutional data, Dr. Adams presented demonstrable evidence in favor of collegiate consolidation:

Over 80 percent of our students were still getting our—even though we offered all these other majors and things, 80 percent of our students were still getting their degree in [a specific major]. So we decided to go back and just offer that one degree. That it was too confusing and that our industry and employment partners really didn’t care whether students had all these other separate names on their diplomas (personal communication, April 10, 2012).
As explained by Dr. Roberts, this academic integration had been long in the making. In summation of this decision, he stated: “Concurrently, with the budget whittling, we decided—and this had pre-dated any problems we had—to redo our curriculum; so we had one streamlined curriculum we were getting to, to replace several minors, majors not listed” (personal communication, March 7, 2012). Though the reasons for collegiate change were relatively clear, perceptions of the strategic planning process and its implementation varied by narrator.

*Planning and Future Direction of the Organization*

A private sector businessman, the Dean approached the aforementioned planning process in the manner most familiar to him—a course of action which promoted fact-based decision-making over personal sentiment. Solidifying his status as an academic outsider, the Dean operated on personality as opposed to politics, providing a concise, logical rationale for the college’s strategic direction. Commenting on this candor, Dr. Kingman offered the following assessment of the Dean:

I guess the thing—you know, even though—and this is a really strange thing, is that even though [the Dean] eliminated our degree program, he did it in such a way—first, like I said, he fought for us. You know, he fought really hard for us when he first became Dean. He was always respectful, and he was always kind. And even when he sat us down and said, “I’m cutting your degree program and your lines,” there was a sense that he did it—and I told him this to his face—he did it honestly, and he did it respectfully and he did it ethically. He didn’t wanna be in that position, but that was the position he was in (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Reinforcing Dr. Kingman’s assertions, Dr. Covey provided a similar description of this pivotal event:

He brought us all in together and sat us down as a faculty, and he explained his rationale and why it had to be done and he said, “I’ll do whatever I have to do to help any of you be successful.” He was real compassionate about it and I think
that was really important. It didn’t take the frustration away. It didn’t take the
anger—the anger’s just a kneejerk reaction (personal communication, February
22, 2012).

Though few doubted the Dean’s sincerity, several faculty members expressed
collections regarding the erosion of shared collegiate governance. A decisive leader, the
Dean tended to trust his instincts, often taking bold action with limited faculty input. In a
telling exchange, Dr. Roberts discussed his impressions of the college’s new
organizational structure:

Interviewer: And this is all based off of a strategic plan, correct?
Dr. Roberts: Yeah. I mean, it was one of the things discussed in the strategic
plan. And it was based on a study that a faculty committee—former faculty
committee did two or three years ago. They came up with several options of how
we could reorganize the college. We’re always looking for constant quality
improvement, but, you know, this is—I’m not sure this is the right path for us to
be taking (personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Seconding Dr. Roberts’ claims, Dr. Adams elaborated on the limitations of faculty
influence during the strategic planning process:

There was a consultant that—we had two different consultants. One was the
original strategic planning process and then a different one in this second strategic
planning process and they did present a, you know, concluding report of, you
know, what was found during the process and it was after that concluding report
that the new structure was shown to the faculty saying, “This is what we’re
doing” (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Despite these hesitations, Dr. Adams did acknowledge that this heavy-handed decision-
making was a consequence of longstanding leadership deficiencies. Expounding on this
caveat, he explained: “Part of the problem is there was never a clear consensus on what
the faculty wanted to do” (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

As the strategic planning process came to a close and implementation
commenced, Dr. James took issue with the college’s new bonus program. Designed to
incentivize high-quality research, this program provided monetary rewards to faculty
members who published in top-tier academic journals. However, only seven academic journals qualified as top-tier. Questioning this outcome, Dr. James stated:

This is part of the new structure. The publishing people had their advisory committee of five people and the associate dean of research said that it came from that committee. “That committee advised me this is the seven publications.” One person who sat on that committee had never heard of it (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Expounding on his displeasure, Dr. James offered a supplemental explanation:

It really wasn’t so much the money but again, they do dumb things because now even the publishers are slick. “Well, if you publish there [in one of these seven journals] you’re going to get money.” Then, those who feel that they excel more at teaching than other areas or service, there’s no incentive there. So you’re going to teach a larger class and there’s no incentive there (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Perceiving this inequitable bonus program as a source of faculty tension, Dr. James alluded to the pitfalls of a two-tiered academic system: “It doesn’t become an incentive; it becomes a disincentive because your colleague could write and put out the same effort you do and make money and you don’t” (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Organizational Sustainability

While personal financial incentives became a hot-button issue, the fiscal health of the college and institution loomed large in the faculty’s collective psyche. Recalling his perceptions of Mountain University’s early retirement program, Dr. Kingman remembered when the President “started talking about—brought out the VSIP program, and he said that if enough people elected to leave, where they could make the budget cut they needed, that his hope was he wouldn’t have to let tenured faculty go” (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Provided this uncertain campus climate, Dr. Adams admitted “that it’s been very hard to find someone [a Dean] to come here” (personal communication, April 10, 2012).
Unable to lure top academic talent as a result of this negative publicity, faculty members acknowledged the core strength of their new leader. As succinctly stated by Dr. Roberts: “He’s a business leader, a very successful one, and a huge fundraiser, he does a good job with that. And he’ll be the first one to say he doesn’t understand academics” (personal communication, March 7, 2012). Referencing a failed capital campaign, Dr. Adams endorsed his wealth of experience in that particular arena, stating: “That was one of the main reasons why our dean was hired from [the private sector], was to—once the, you know, budget got straightened out a little bit, to get that project back off the ground” (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

In addition to concerns about Mountain University’s financial stability, faculty members expressed qualms regarding the demographic and academic orientation of their college. Relating his perspectives on these matters, Dr. Covey made the following observations:

I think overall the college is stronger. I think from a research perspective that remains to be seen until we see what we—we have two people right now left on tenure track. That means everybody else is an associate professor or—if you look at the average age of this college, this university, it scares me. I look around the college and I’d say it’s probably in the 50s—the average age of the college. I mean, we’ve got faculty in their 70s, you know (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Referring to Mountain University as an “immature” research institution, Dr. Covey further contextualized his position:

Our research resources here are just pitiful. Our dean is committed to making those changes. That’s one of the reasons he reorganized—but the college, as a whole here, doesn’t yet have a—there’s folks who do really good research in the college, don’t get me wrong. But as a whole, in many ways, we’re still a teaching college (personal communication, February 22, 2012).
Believing that “if we’re not going to bring folks in that can do solid research, we’re just shooting ourselves in the head,” Dr. Covey underscored the college’s conundrum. In summation, he offered the following prediction:

I think over the next five to ten years that’s going to change in this college as we’re bringing better and better people into the college. If they don’t come in with a research orientation—if we don’t change the way we do graduate studies in this university—we’re never going to be a research-intensive university. They can say that to the world. A bunch of crap (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

In addition to these esoteric concerns, faculty members touched on more eclectic, practical matters. A visionary thinker in this vein, Dr. Covey questioned why administrative consolidation was not pursued as an alternative to faculty termination.

Commenting on this curiosity, Dr. Covey recalled:

I did note that no college was eliminated through this whole process and they easily could’ve gotten rid of two or three colleges. I would’ve gotten rid of—I would have combined [two specified colleges]. I would’ve combined [two additional colleges] but I think there’s enough clout in the community—[the first two colleges]—they have a lot of power. We’ve got a lot of power. [Another college] has got some power; not as much (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Alluding to the intangibles of university politics, Dr. Covey recognized that it was much simpler to eliminate individual faculty members than to consolidate “turf.” However, the overall loss of college colleagues due to retirements, departures, and dismissals had taken its toll on the student body. As summarized by Dr. Kingman: “There’s no way that the quality of the education they got was the same” (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

*Nature of the Business Environment*

Offering his perspectives on Mountain State and the fate of his unit, Dr. Covey made the following observation:
Do I wish it had gone a different way? I sure do. I think we could’ve built a really, really strong program here. What’s my take on [Mountain State]? [Mountain State] as a state does not value higher education. Had I known that [when I came to work here], I might’ve rethought it but I was ready to move (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Though disillusioned with Mountain State’s educational philosophy, Dr. Covey found Mountain University’s academic direction to be equally disconcerting. Panning the institution’s treatment of its graduate students, Dr. Covey opined:

Most doctoral students on state funds have to teach three courses—two courses a semester I think it is. You cannot build a graduate program and graduate students that are going to be competitive in the marketplace by having them teach that kind of a load (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

As evidenced by faculty commentary, it is clear that the strategic planning process had engendered significant controversy—debates which soon escalated into extreme structural uncertainty.

**Structural Uncertainty**

A product of a department-less governance model, structural uncertainty pervaded the college of Units 3 and 4. Without a department chair to turn to, faculty members struggled to determine the appropriate chain of command. Absent clear hierarchical lines, academics expressed consternation at the wide span of control and limited points of confluence. Commentary on specific aspects of structural uncertainty appears below.

*Reporting Structures*

Perceiving academic departments as “competitive units” or “silos,” the Dean conceived a new collegiate reporting structure in Spring 2011 (Dr. James, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Substituting a corporate model for the college’s thirty-year-old reporting structure (see Figure 2 below), this new hierarchy (see Figure 3 below) engendered widespread uncertainty amongst affiliated faculty. Against the advice
of Dr. James, Dr. Roberts, and the units’ Organizational Structure Report (2009), the Dean eliminated all departments—replacing traditional department chairs with associate and assistant deans.

In a classic academic structure, faculty from each department elect a department chair, who then reports to the Dean.

In conjunction with administrative support staff, department chairs assign faculty workload, schedule departmental courses, and handle student concerns.

Department chairs maintain a close relationship with their faculty as a result of disciplinary ties and frequent contact at formal department meetings and more informal daily interactions.

*Figure 2. College Reporting Structure, 1980s-June 30, 2011*

The Dean’s Executive Committee is comprised of the three associate deans, an assistant dean, three professional directors, and one member from each 5-member faculty advisory committee (FACO). These ten individuals consult with the Dean on a monthly basis.

Each associate dean has been vested with powers akin to those of former department chairs. The three individuals meet monthly, and are responsible for respectively evaluating the faculty according to their designation (academics, research, service).

Members of faculty advisory committees are elected by the faculty at-large. Faculty can only serve on one committee; there are no concurrent appointments. The dean convenes ad hoc committees where appropriate to deal with issues such as course modifications, new course proposals, etc.

*Figure 3. College Reporting Structure, July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012*

While the 2011-2015 strategic plan did call for “improve[ing] the structure of the College to function in a more efficient and professional manner,” the move to eliminate all departments did not flow from nor sit well with members of the faculty (Mountain University [Units 3 & 4] College, 2011, p.27). Indeed, Dr. James offered the following assessment of the new model:

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Now that we have the single structure, he [the Dean] has eliminated the silos but has created an “Us against Them” mentality. “Us” being the people in the administration—him, the three associate deans and assistant dean—against “Them” the faculty. Since then they have roughshodded rules like, “Okay, this is the new rules.” “Well, who made these rules?” “The executive committee and there’s no rebuttal” (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Alluding to the faculty’s sentiments, Dr. Adams revealed: “There’s definitely discussion that, well, you know, four or five years down the line if we, you know, have a new dean, then we’d go back to having departments” (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Tangential to these assertions, Dr. Roberts alluded to the central issue of communication in a department-less college. Contending that “there was no home for people” in this new structure, Dr. Roberts railed against the “hearsay and bullshit” of hallway chatter (personal communication, March 7, 2012). In further explication, Dr. James declared:

When you have a span of control that wide you need to break it down. The original dean—when we had 12, 14, 16 faculty—treated it more like a large department. He could interface with 16 people. When you get to be 61 [college faculty members] you need to break them into units so that—several reasons I thought it was effective. Number one, you chose your department chair so the department chair had a stake in listening to you. It also worked against you, too. I mean, if you didn’t want to be popular you might lose your job so there’s an understanding of that. But also, they got to know the faculty better and could place them, I think, in positions that were more effective for teaching. I think they also understood where the faculty strengths were. Some were in publishing, some were in service, some were in teaching. And reward them accordingly. Now, we have 41 faculty and literally one person. I just think the span of control is not effective (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Clarifying his original position, Dr. Roberts stated:

But what I mean, what I’m saying is that, instead of having faculty meetings by department where you could talk about issues, there’s no place to do that now. Sure, there’s faculty meetings. How are you going to talk about issues in a faculty meeting with 41 people in it, how are you going to have a meaningful discussion? (personal communication, March 7, 2012)
Exemplifying Dr. Roberts’ foreboding, collegiate faculty expressed consternation in regard to the annual evaluation process. Formerly the purview of department chairs, this new procedure called for a three-way evaluation among the Associate Deans. Intended to enhance the robustness of annual evaluations, this method instead resulted in the opposite outcome. Commenting on this academic anomaly, Dr. Covey asserted: “I’ve been in higher education for 40 years and I’ve never seen this model” (personal communication, February 22, 2012). Confusing and chaotic, Dr. Adams described the process as follows:

And, you know, I haven’t heard any real complaints—hadn’t heard any complaints that people were upset about the fairness of their evaluation or anything bad. It was just really un-wieldy and a little bit more time consuming process for the Associate Deans since they were all evaluating. [Laughter] I know the Associate Deans didn’t care for the process too much, you know, because they had 38 different applications they had to evaluate (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

In the following exchange, Dr. Roberts (personal communication, March 7, 2012) provides additional insight into procedural shortcomings:

Dr. Roberts: And there illustrates the problem, because when I was chair of [Unit 3], and let’s say you were in my department. Donoff, is your name?
Interviewer: Susan Donoff, yes.
Dr. Roberts: You forget to tell me that you worked on Three Square meal thing, community service, and you forget to put it down [on your annual evaluation]; because I talk to you every day, I know that maybe you’re an airhead sometimes and you didn’t put it down there, but I know what you did. So I’ll go ahead and add it in for you, and then I know what you did and I can rate it properly. See what I’m saying?
Interviewer: But now you’re kind of removed?
Dr. Roberts: Correct. I’d also know if you’re B.S.ing me, too.
Interviewer: And now you don’t really—well…
Dr. Roberts: No idea.

While faculty evaluations certainly left much to be desired, Dr. Adams (personal communication, April 10, 2012) discerned further structural deficiencies:
You know, what it messes up is those lines of reporting and that clarity of who you go to, both the faculty and the student lines that people were used to for that. You know, for the students, you know, it’s now that the associate dean and the assistant dean, you know, are handling most of the student issues there. You know, the students don’t notice a difference as much, because they probably never really understood the departments either. The other interesting part of it is that we still—all our classes are still listed under the prefixes of these different departments. [Names relevant prefixes], because in the process of all the common course numbering and things for the entire system, like [the local community college] uses those same course numbers and things like that. So, you know, there was a question about [going to one uniform prefix]. Now we can’t—we wouldn’t even be able to do that, because then that would mess up [the local community college] after they made a bunch of changes six, eight years ago, so their stuff would comply with ours, because we had departments.

Aware of the numerous issues that arose during the first year of implementation, the Dean announced a modified structure at the February 2012 faculty meeting. Taking effect July 1, 2012, the new reporting hierarchy (see Figure 4 below) sought to remedy the aforementioned structural weaknesses. In a stroke of academic irony, Dr. Adams described the new “assistant dean for operations as basically everything a department chair would have been doing anyway” (personal communication, April 10, 2012). Eager to return to their longstanding departmental structure, faculty members moved to recreate this same position under a different title.
Functionality of the Unit

Adjusting to the new department-less structure proved challenging for college faculty members, resulting in many of the same outcomes as individuals in “saved” units. Though departmental advocacy did not take the same forms as in Units 1 and 2, academics in Units 3 and 4 did express concerns about scholarly productivity. While Dr. Covey “found that I had—I got the lowest teaching scores I’ve ever gotten in my life last semester,” (personal communication, February 22, 2012) Dr. Kingman admitted “that if I hadn’t had some things kind of in the hopper that my research productivity would’ve just almost dropped off completely” (personal communication, February 28, 2012). A function of stress, Drs. Covey and Kingman allude to one of the unintended consequences of departmental restructuring.

Continuing in this vein, Dr. Kingman explained: “this whole process brings out the worst in people, you know, very much—at least that was our experience in the [name
removed] College, very much people trying to protect themselves” (personal communication, February 28, 2012). Acknowledging the importance of jockeying, Dr. Roberts admitted that “the view as the lead horse is a lot better than the view from behind that lead horse” (personal communication, March 7, 2012). Unwilling to fight the rising tide of corporatism, faculty members looked for new opportunities in this contemporary reporting structure. Admitting his fascination with this atypical hierarchy, Dr. Covey declared: “I think we’re stronger because we’ve come together and we’re better able to focus our resources and our energies. Do I think it will last? Who knows?” (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

**Job-Related Uncertainty**

Like faculty in “saved” units, academics in eliminated units discussed key components of job-related uncertainty. While these departmental eliminations were for ideological rather than financial reasons, faculty members expressed similar sentiments as it pertained to this realm of inquiry. Faculty commentary on aspects of job-related uncertainty appears below.

**Job Security**

Though TVSIP program participation spared tenured faculty, non-tenured individuals in the college were not as fortunate. Speaking about this very subject, Dr. Kingman offered a troubling caveat, stating: “Unfortunately, our junior faculty, they were told straight up, look ‘em in the eye, “Don’t worry. You know, I’m telling you, you don’t have to worry about it” (personal communication, February 28, 2012). Piggybacking on this assertion, Dr. Covey noted the following:

We had made a couple of really good hires. Three of us came in—two of us at the same time and the next year we got another person it—and they were good leaders.
They were going to be solid researchers; they were going to move us in the direction we needed to go and do the kinds of things that needed to be done (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

In addition to the loss of promising tenure-track faculty, Dr. Kingman recounted the collegiate climate during this tumultuous time:

The junior faculty were saying, “Well, if we bring in tenured faculty and our college takes another cut, the first people to go are the untenured faculty, so we don’t want more tenured faculty here.” So they were looking at colleagues from across campus that were potentially losing their jobs and saying, “I’m putting my needs first.” I had faculty members that said, “You know, I’ve got three kids to feed, and I will do anything it takes not to lose my job, including sacrificing a colleague” (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Unwilling to accommodate their institutional colleagues, Dr. Kingman offered a macabre metaphor: “I mean, so, you know, there’s kind of dead bodies scattered all over the place, as far as, you know, what happened to people” (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Though non-tenured faculty members clung tightly to their positions, long-time Mountain University academics conveyed no such fears. Underscoring these sentiments, Dr. James acknowledged: “Me, personally, it doesn’t make a difference. I’m close to retirement” (personal communication, February 27, 2012). In a similar vein, Dr. Covey stated:

I’m a tenured, full professor and there’s nothing they can do to me without removing tenure from the university. It would take them six years to fire me and I’m going to do my job and I’m going to do it well. But I’m going to research what I want to research (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Despite hard-hitting financial challenges to the college and university, tenured faculty members in Units 3 and 4 expressed no doubts about their continued employment.
Promotion Opportunities

Perhaps the most hot-button issue amongst faculty members, a new “pay for publishing” program had touched off intra-collegiate rivalries. As framed by Dr. Covey:

He [the Dean] announced at our last faculty meeting that if you publish in a top-tier journal we’ll pay you for it. $3,000…There was a group out there that was absolutely opposed to it because they don’t publish in those particular journals (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Among the opponents of this enticement, Dr. James offered a compelling counter-assertion:

Well, the journals they listed seemed to favor a certain part of the people because they tried to publish in there and the others are going, “Look, I’m publishing in what I feel to be top journals in my area but there’s no financial incentive here.” That really pissed people off. Then the people who teach and do service say, “Why is it so important? These people are getting course releases to publish—that’s their job—so why are you rewarding them with more money?” I mean, we have things like teacher—from within the college—teacher of the year, publisher of the year, service person of the year. You get extra money for that; one in each category. But this is like if you publish you’re going to get money (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

In addition to this burgeoning controversy, faculty members expressed concerns regarding advancement opportunities both within and outside the college. Discussing the former, Dr. Adams questioned his ability to move up in the current institutional environment:

So we’ll see what happens with that over the next couple years and there will be room, because some of the people that are in the associate dean positions and things, you know, are probably only gonna be here another couple years before they retire. So hopefully there will be room to move up from there (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

In a related vein, Dr. Covey explicated his scholarly stagnation:

I’m not going to retire and I’m not at a point in my career where people are going to want to hire me. I always thought that age discrimination was a bunch of nonsense; maybe it’s a personal thing (personal communication, February 22, 2012).
Despite limited promotional opportunities at Mountain University, faculty members accepted the security of their current employment rather than take their chances at another institution.

Changes to the Job Role

As a result of budgetary-induced retirements and departures, collegiate faculty members dwindled from a high of sixty to an all-time low of forty. A reduction of this magnitude, occurring over a mere three-year time period, caused considerable changes to the job roles of remaining faculty members. Discussing this phenomenon, Dr. James made the following observation:

Well, as we lost faculty they arbitrarily increased the size of the classes immensely. Normally, we taught like a 60-size classroom because that’s where our structure is. Our original dean set up for about 60 to a class, which, having taught at 60, was maybe I just got used to it. It was a pretty ideal situation. Now, you can walk in with 150 in your class. 200 sometimes. And while it might lend itself to certain classes—maybe you could with 200—teachers were put in classes they were ill prepared for. They said, “Well, if you can teach 40 why can’t you teach 150?” Well, unless you’ve taught you don’t know the dynamics of a 150 class versus a 40 class (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

In addition to Dr. James’ assertions, Dr. Kingman conveyed the burden of increased service obligations:

Yeah, graduate committees. Yeah, and it, you know—I chaired a lot of graduate committees, and I don’t know if I chaired more, but it meant that since there were only [a few] of us left, that we had to serve on all of the committees. You know, it was kind of a member of a committee if not the chair of the committee. And so, I mean, we just became the group that was responsible for just making it go (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

Faced with a loss of a third of their faculty colleagues, members of Units 3 and 4 struggled to balance teaching, research, and service. As expressed by Dr. Adams:

And everybody’s gone from teaching two to three classes or three classes to four, teaching large size classes and then you have, you know, that many fewer people to spread around all these committees. You know, so now, you know, where you
used to just go to a department meeting, now you’re on one of these advisory committees and, you know, everybody’s still on their other curriculum committees, college-university committees and things (personal communication, April 10, 2012).

While amplified teaching and service responsibilities represented the lion’s share of faculty commentary, members of Units 3 and 4 also discussed a decrease in shared governance. In the following monologue, Dr. James outlines one aspect of this trend:

He [the Dean] uses them [the college bylaws] when they’re at his convenience and when they’re not at his convenience he says they’re not in sync with the university’s bylaws; therefore, at this time we can’t use them. Other times he uses them. When he first got here they wanted to…I forget what it was but we had a vote. According to our bylaws the vote did not pass but he wanted it so he said, “Listen, I really want this so I’m going to move that way.” Everybody was hunky-dory at that time, saying, “Well, okay. You’re new. Fine.” We should have never—we should’ve held our ground right from the beginning, which we didn’t (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Furthermore, Dr. Roberts offered another example of circumscribed faculty input:

Well, the one issue that came up is the [name removed] course, there was a discussion on one of these. Somebody in the college, a senior person, wanted it gone. So they did convene an ad hoc committee of people they thought would be interested in [this particular aspect of the college], and they discussed whether we should do away with [this particular] course, and they decided to. But the conversation was not a focused conversation by all the people who should have been there having this conversation. It should have started with the people who are, in one way or another, involved in either teaching that course or using the students’ skills who have taken that course in the other courses. And then it can go to the college level; because normally, you’d have the discussion like this in the department, the department makes a course proposal or a change proposal. That’s standard throughout any university (personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Moreover, “the faculty never voted on the decision to totally eliminate the departments,” in spite of contrary assertions advanced to the governing body (Dr. Adams, personal communication, April 10, 2012). As reinforced by Dr. James:

I think one thing that was discouraging is when the president presented it to the [governing body] that there’s a new structure in the [name removed] college and we were told by someone in attendance—because none of the faculty were at the
[governing body] meetings—that this was passed with a vote of the faculty of the college. No vote was ever taken (personal communication, February 27, 2012).

In a tangential vein, Dr. Covey cited the erosion of core principles of faculty governance:

We’re bringing in five faculty—one senior—and we’re bringing in four people for interviews. We’ve got five positions. One’s a senior faculty—who would come in as a senior faculty member and we’re bringing in three other folks—all who got their Ph.Ds. here. To me, that doesn’t speak well. You don’t do that (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Relieved to no longer be a chair, Dr. Covey underscored a positive aspect of the zero-department structure:

I used to get here at 6:30, 7:00 in the morning. I come in at 8:30 now. I get up in the morning and sort of dink around. If I want to stay home like I did yesterday, I stayed home and wrote all day long. I couldn’t do that as an administrator. I had to be here. It’s been liberating for me in a way because I rediscovered how much fun it is to be a faculty member (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

**Effect of the Department Chair: Unit 3**

Though acting in a different capacity than a “saved” department chair, the academic leader of Unit 3 nonetheless affected perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty. Using analytic induction and Berg’s (2007) concepts of manifest and latent messaging, I interpreted the actions of Unit 3’s department chair below.

*Positive Personality*

Unable to change the Dean’s mind as it pertained to departmental elimination, Dr. Roberts elected to “put a positive spin” on the college’s new direction. Recognizing the utility of being “a cheerleader,” he outlined his leadership philosophy as follows:

It is what it is. You have to—students are why we’re here. We’re here for the students, that’s the number one reason. We’re not here to design organizations, we’re not here to write memos, we’re here for the students.
Refusing to “be a sourpuss,” Dr. Roberts underscored his “collaborative style” and “willing[ness] to make tough decisions” as hallmarks of an effective chair. Elaborating on this leadership methodology, he explained:

> You gain a lot more with a teaspoon of honey than you do with a gallon of vinegar, and that’s just the way it is. And I think people want to know the truth, people want to know—for you to be firm with them; but you have to be firm, you have to be fair, you have to be consistent. That’s true in the classroom and it’s true in management. I think that, for me, the style then is to look at this as a partnership of professionals.

Resolved to move with rather than against the tide of collegiate leadership, Dr. Roberts embraced these administrative challenges, and encouraged his former departmental colleagues to do the same (personal communication, March 7, 2012).

**Effect of the Department Chair: Unit 4**

Similar to Dr. Roberts, Dr. Covey affected faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty through his unique leadership style. While not as exuberant as Dr. Roberts in his endorsement of the college’s direction, he nonetheless moved with, rather than against, the new Dean.

**Realistic Outlook**

A sensible and pragmatic leader, Dr. Covey summarized his position: “First goal was to save the department. Second goal was to save the program. Third goal was to survive.” Concerned with preserving the employment of his departmental colleagues, Dr. Covey conveyed his stance: “Look, we’re going to die anyway. Let’s see if we can save the program.” Straightforward in his delivery, Dr. Covey’s words struck a chord with his faculty. Recapping his message, Dr. Covey recalled:

> It doesn’t do any good to whine. That’s what I used to tell my kids. “We don’t whine in this house.” We fought a good battle and I came here to a very bright future. It didn’t work out that way. It’s okay. I go home at
night, sleep good. I go home, some nights I go home and whine, but [my spouse] tells me to shut up.

Though he and his colleagues “felt like we weren’t appreciated,” he reserved his ire for the Mountain University Faculty Senate:

I felt like they rolled over and played dead. Now, we had to make cuts at the university; that’s a given. Somebody’s gonna go. We’re a small program, we’re a new program. We had time over the twenty years the program was in existence before I got here to do those kinds of things. They didn’t do it.

Frustrated with a lack of faculty advocacy, Dr. Covey nonetheless acknowledged the role of recession in this latest outcome, stating: “had the economy not gone sour we’d still be a department and we wouldn’t be going” (personal communication, February 22, 2012).

Summary

Bound together by the shared phenomenon of departmental elimination, the members of Units 3 and 4 revealed numerous unintended consequences of structural change. Struggling with the loss of a third of their colleagues, remaining collegiate faculty absorbed this workload via increased teaching and service obligations. Though Units 1 and 2 made frequent use of military imagery, Units 3 and 4 underscored the “death” of their respective departments. In this vein, Dr. Kingman (Unit 4) recalled “dead bodies scattered all over the place,” while Dr. James lamented the “fait accompli” of departmental elimination. Although somewhat accepting of this change in direction, faculty members and former department chairs continued to voice their concerns regarding the perceived erosion of shared governance. Chapter 5 concludes this study, and includes a discussion of findings, theoretical and practical implications, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction and Overview of Study

An emergent and expanding phenomenon, departmental/programmatic eliminations represent a new paradigm in the history of American higher education. Following decades of unprecedented growth in student enrollments, disciplinary offerings, and campus acreage, sharp decreases in state subsidies have forced public institutions into a precarious position. Leery of sharp tuition increases due to their detrimental effects on student access, administrators have elected to balance budgets on the backs of state employees. Though faculty members represent but one constituency affected by this strategic direction, their historical status as university guardians heightens the stakes of this perilous pursuit.

In the current study, I interviewed thirteen tenured faculty members regarding their experiences with departmental/programmatic elimination at Mountain University. Though grateful for gainful employment in a turbulent job market, these individuals expressed serious concerns about the direction of their institution. While numerous comments pertained exclusively to Mountain University, several remarks heralded disquieting trends in American higher education. Expanding on these points, I discuss findings, theoretical and practical implications, and recommendations for future research in the following sections.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

How do individuals experience a potential departmental/programmatic elimination?
Framed to provide the greatest leeway in individual responses, faculty members expressed emotions ranging from anger to bewilderment to reluctant acceptance. Though each scholar shared his/her own unique experiences with departmental/programmatic elimination, certain commonalities emerged throughout the interview process. In this manner, faculty lamented their general disempowerment as it pertained to the university’s strategic direction. Caught between a highly competitive job market and an uncertain future at Mountain University, many faculty members chose to stay at their current institution. Moreover, several individuals cited family (i.e. spouse, children, etc.) concerns as paramount in their decision-making process. Hesitant to disrupt the lives of their family members and fearful of moving to another undesirable situation, many faculty members elected to ride out the current financial storm in the hopes of a brighter, post-recession future at Mountain University. Based upon the thirteen interviews conducted for this study, gender and rank were non-factors in a faculty member’s decision to seek new employment or remain at Mountain University. Table 6 provides general demographic characteristics of interview participants.

Table 6

*Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>9 men (69%); 4 women (31%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>13 Caucasians (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit Classification</td>
<td>4 non-STEM units (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>5 Associate Professors (38%); 8 Full Professors (62%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 2

To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations?

Absent clear, data-driven performance indicators, faculty members were free to speculate as to their newfound status. In this manner, Mountain University faculty members questioned the metrics which had placed them in academic jeopardy. Citing outdated records and dubious definitions of “productivity,” faculty in Units 1 and 2 pushed back against these categorizations through varied efforts at departmental advocacy. Alerting their respective professional associations was a tactic shared by Units 1 and 2, in addition to formulating alternative revenue generating/cost savings proposals. Though grounded in a college-wide strategic planning process, scholars in Units 3 and 4 disputed the Dean’s vision of corporate governance. Working to recreate their familiar departmental configuration, faculty members in Units 3 and 4 refashioned job titles and reporting structures to mimic traditional academic organizations.

Perceiving profound organizational differences between private industry and public education, faculty members provided several concrete examples to substantiate these claims. Hired for his expertise in fundraising and his ties to business and industry, the Dean of Units 3 and 4 readily admitted his inexperience with shared governance. Conversely, faculty members in Units 1 and 2 conveyed no such issues with academic leadership, having retained the chairs of their respective departments. Interestingly, the possibility of elimination had opposing effects on the collective functionality of Units 1 and 2. Stronger for having shared in the fight to save their department, Unit 1 faculty exhibited newfound solidarity, while faculty in Unit 2 fractured during their own call to
arms. Believing that frequent meetings/faculty interaction brought their unit closer together, members of Unit 1 witnessed a collective surge in teaching evaluations. Alternatively, Unit 2 split according to rank, with junior faculty resentful of senior faculty for their tenured employment and secure salary.

Running the gamut from pressing concern to trivial afterthought, job-related uncertainty produced extreme anxiety for some and presented little worry for others. Perhaps dependent upon personality and other unaccountable psychological factors, job-related uncertainty varied by individual narrator. However, of explicated concerns, uninterrupted academic employment was the most common faculty apprehension. Concerns regarding individual promotion/advancement were more pronounced in Units 3 and 4, while faculty members in Units 1 and 2 expressed anxieties as to departmental prestige and the future of their respective disciplines. Table 7 provides an overview of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty across Units 1-4.

Table 7

Manifestations of Uncertainty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Uncertainty</th>
<th>Unit 1 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 2 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 3 Eliminated</th>
<th>Unit 4 Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>Confusion regarding strategy</td>
<td>Confusion regarding strategy</td>
<td>Disagreement regarding strategy</td>
<td>Disagreement regarding strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>Cohesion; Low research productivity; Reporting structure unchanged</td>
<td>Disunion; Stable research productivity; Reporting structure unchanged</td>
<td>Chaotic; Absence of traditional reporting structures</td>
<td>Chaotic; Absence of traditional reporting structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-Related</td>
<td>Increased class size; Perceived erosion of tenure</td>
<td>Increased class size; Devalued/demoralized</td>
<td>Increased class size; Fairly secure due to retirements</td>
<td>Increased class size; Fairly secure due to retirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 3

How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties?

Acting as the departmental bellwether, chairs in Units 1-4 exhibited leadership by advocating on behalf of their faculty colleagues. While management styles varied by individual, messages of solidarity were a common theme across all department chair interviews. In Unit 1, Dr. Smith turned negative attitudes into constructive action, assigning faculty to fact-finding missions to focus their attention. Meanwhile, in Unit 2, Dr. Hayes embraced faculty consultation, inviting them to comment on a department-wide productivity report. In Units 3 and 4, Drs. Roberts and Covey encouraged their faculty colleagues to think positively about the college’s latest direction, refusing to publicly undermine the new Dean.

While there are no real winners in a budget battle of this magnitude, chairs in Units 1 and 2 were instrumental in saving their units from potential elimination. Able to contribute to unitary advocacy in ways circumscribed to regular faculty members, Drs. Smith and Hayes accessed and deciphered departmental data, contacted national professional associations, and used the power of the press to increase their institutional leverage. Conversely, Drs. Covey and Roberts knew when to lay down their arms, encouraging their faculty colleagues to support the Dean’s vision. Refusing to be a source of dissention and divisiveness within the college, the chairs of Units 3 and 4 attempted to illustrate the positives while remaining cognizant of perceived organizational flaws. Still in its initial stages, it is difficult to speculate as to the long-
range outcomes of faculty advocacy in Units 3 and 4. Table 8 outlines the pertinent activities/personality traits of the department chairs in Units 1-4.

Table 8

Activities and Personality Traits of the Department Chair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department Chair</th>
<th>Dr. Smith Unit 1 Saved</th>
<th>Dr. Hayes Unit 2 Saved</th>
<th>Dr. Roberts Unit 3 Eliminated</th>
<th>Dr. Covey Unit 4 Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Personality Traits</td>
<td>Acquire &amp; Communicate; Tone Setting; Strategizing; Recruiting Outside Help</td>
<td>Acquire &amp; Communicate; Tone Setting; Strategizing; Recruiting Outside Help</td>
<td>Positive Personality</td>
<td>Realistic Outlook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4

How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units?

A feature of qualitative methodology, Yin (2009) advocates cross-case synthesis as a means to “address the most significant aspect of your case study” (p.161). In Tables 9-11, I employed a scale of mild, moderate, or severe to characterize each unit’s response, based upon the portion of the interview devoted towards each type of uncertainty. As illustrated below, perceptual differences existed between “saved” and “eliminated” units. While saved units experienced considerable strategic uncertainty, the prevalence of a strategic plan in eliminated units circumscribed this outcome. Conversely, faculty members in eliminated units reported severe structural uncertainty, while individuals in saved units encountered few disturbances in this arena. Though experimentation with alternative hierarchies is indeed an admirable innovation, the swift
erosion of a long-standing bureaucratic model engendered considerable confusion for faculty, staff, and students. Perhaps the most opaque of the three types of uncertainty, job-related uncertainty did not differ by unitary status. Indeed, perceptions of job-related uncertainty tended to vary by faculty rank and unit dynamic, though all four units reported a sharp increase in class sizes.

Table 9

*A Comparison of “Saved” vs. “Eliminated” Units: Strategic Uncertainty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit 1 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 2 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 3 Eliminated</th>
<th>Unit 4 Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Uncertainty</strong></td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for Organizational Change</strong></td>
<td>$ Driven</td>
<td>$ Driven</td>
<td>Strategic plan</td>
<td>Strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning &amp; Future Direction</strong></td>
<td>Mission-driven</td>
<td>Productivity-driven</td>
<td>Corporate model</td>
<td>Corporate model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>TFVSIP; Court ruling; Bunker mentality</td>
<td>Legislative support; Enrollment decline</td>
<td>Fundraising; Faculty demographics; Research infrastructure</td>
<td>Fundraising; Faculty demographics; Research infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of the Business Environment</strong></td>
<td>Lack of public support for education</td>
<td>Market-model; Differential tuition</td>
<td>Mountain State does not value higher education</td>
<td>Mountain State does not value higher education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

*A Comparison of “Saved” vs. “Eliminated” Units: Structural Uncertainty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit 1 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 2 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 3 Eliminated</th>
<th>Unit 4 Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural Uncertainty</strong></td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reporting Structures</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Hierarchical confusion</td>
<td>Hierarchical confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functionality of Unit</strong></td>
<td>Positive; Low productivity</td>
<td>Negative; Stable productivity</td>
<td>Stress; Productivity declines</td>
<td>Stress; Productivity declines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 11

*A Comparison of “Saved” vs. “Eliminated” Units: Job-Related Uncertainty*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit 1 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 2 Saved</th>
<th>Unit 3 Eliminated</th>
<th>Unit 4 Eliminated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job-Related Uncertainty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Job Security</strong></td>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>erosion of tenure</td>
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<tr>
<td>protections</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TFVSIP participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>saved jobs;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenured full professors</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>feel secure</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Promotion Opportunities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Damaged reputation</td>
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<td>Pay for</td>
<td>Pay for</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>publishing</td>
<td>publishing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Changes to the Job Role</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased class size;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>obligations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreased research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in shared</td>
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<td>governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decrease in shared</td>
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<td>governance</td>
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### Discussion of Findings

Though participant perceptions varied widely, it is important to call attention to topics which resonated across departments, programs, and individuals. In this regard, narrators universally noted increased class sizes—a decision made unilaterally and without faculty input. In *The fall of the faculty: The rise of the all-administrative university and why it matters*, long-time academician Benjamin Ginsberg (2011) offered the following assessment of teaching in an administrative environment:

The first dimension along which the all-administrative university differs from its faculty-directed counterpart is pedagogy. From the professorial perspective, the university exists to promote teaching by providing faculty members with classrooms, laboratories, libraries, computers, and other instructional resources. From the administrative perspective, however, the purpose of teaching is to bring fee-paying customers (sometimes known as students) into its dormitories and
classrooms. Administrators think teaching serves the university, not the converse (p.170).

While this new paradigm serves to erode one of the core functions of the traditional academic triad, it is the students who suffer the severest consequences. As reinforced by Keeling and Hersh (2012):

Why has higher education abandoned higher learning? Because learning itself is no longer the first priority in most colleges and universities, despite the fact that the core mission of every institution of higher education is exactly that—learning. The many recent critiques that assail colleges and universities for rising costs, rampant inefficiencies, and insufficient accountability hit other targets but miss this key point. Without higher learning, higher education is just a series of steps that lead to a degree—the receipt of which is evidence of nothing except the completion of those steps (pp. 1-2).

As faculty-student ratios inch higher, and part-timers replace tenured faculty, opportunities for individualized attention decline accordingly (June, 2012a). Seasoned scholar and AAUP advocate Ronald Ehrenberg (2011) underscores this phenomenon:

As economists are fond of pointing out, there is no such thing as a free lunch. A growing body of research suggests that reliance on lower-cost, full-time, nontenure-track faculty and/or part-time faculty may adversely affect student outcomes. For example, my own research with Liang Zhang, which used institutional-level panel data, found that, holding other factors constant, when a four-year academic institution increases its use of either full-time nontenure-track faculty or part-time faculty, its undergraduate students’ first-year persistence rates and graduation rates go down (p.107).

Provided faculty members’ assertions correlating increased class sizes to diminished instructional quality, (see pp. 105-106, 133-134, 164) Mountain University may well witness a decrease in graduation and persistence rates as current and future cohorts progress through this modified system.

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, changes to faculty working conditions (e.g. increased class sizes) were made without due regard to established principles of shared governance. Though Mortimer and Sathre (2007) acknowledge “that there are
fundamental disagreements within the academy about what shared governance actually means and how it should be implemented,” (p.21) the AAUP provides a succinct statement on the matter:

Areas that require joint efforts among the board, administration, and faculty include long-range planning, decisions on buildings and facilities, resource allocation, and short-and long-range priorities. The faculty have primary responsibility for the curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and areas of student life that relate to the educational process (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007, p.23).

Provided these assertions, new forms of academic collectivization may gain momentum.

As elucidated by Fethke and Policano (2012) in Public no more: A new path to excellence in America’s public universities:

Interest in faculty unionization may grow as public support for education declines and universities make increasing use of part-time instructors as a way to combat shrinking funding and to convert fixed costs to variable costs. Any erosion of tenure might accelerate this move. The countervailing force in the current environment is the resistance to public unions by governors and legislators in budget-strapped states; this is happening in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, New York, Florida, and elsewhere (p.175).

In pages 102-103, members of Unit 1 and a Mountain University Faculty Senator expressed deep reservations regarding the erosion of tenure. Given the current financial recession and low status afforded public higher education in Mountain State, faculty may continue to witness increased administrative oversight coupled with diminished opportunities for shared governance.

Though the aforementioned trends are at the forefront of academic governance debates, perhaps the most intriguing finding of this study pertains to the differences in experience between those individuals in “saved” and “eliminated” units. As visually displayed in Tables 6-8, the formal strategic planning process in Units 3 and 4 enhanced inter-unit communication, while the absence of such a process severely inhibited the
faculty’s directional conception in Units 1 and 2. Firmly ensconced in a familiar departmental configuration, faculty in Units 1 and 2 experienced minimal levels of structural uncertainty, however, faculty in the department-less structure of Units 3 and 4 (see pp. 155-160) reported dire dilemmas regarding hierarchical structures, administrative assignments, and bureaucratic functionality. As reinforced by Mel Schiavelli, former provost and interim president at the College of William & Mary and provost at the University of Delaware:

The departmental structure, the college-within-the-university structure—these are silos within which people in traditional disciplines live. I used to think you could knock those silos down. Well, believe me, that is the most difficult thing in a university to have happen, partly because of the reward system for faculty. You’re rewarded for contributions to your discipline, as opposed to contributions to your institution (Marcus, 2011, p.42).

A feature of the “functionalist paradigm,” business approaches to organizational change have engendered considerable controversy at Mountain University, with faculty in Units 3 and 4 expressing clear frustration with the imposition of a non-academic governance model (Kezar, 2012, p.183). Provided the stress-related losses in productivity and professional discontent with “corporate” governance, it is likely that the departure of the current dean will herald a return to a department-driven structure.

A pioneer of the program elimination literature, Sheila Slaughter’s (1993) seminal study on the corporatization of academe continues to stand the test of time. Connecting the pro-business discourse of the Reagan administration to the restructuring of academic labor, Slaughter’s analysis underscored recession as the crux of this phenomenon. Charged with managing the fiscal affairs of an institution, administrators must craft a university budget which meets the funding allocation specified by the state. In times of
fiscal crisis, intra-collegiate contests become more pronounced, opening the door to political decision-making.

Ten years later, Peter Eckel (2003) drew similar conclusions regarding the influence of internal politics in program closure proceedings. In this regard, Eckel’s (2003) narrators conveyed numerous instances of institutional politics, leading the author to the following realization:

The political frame is based upon the premise that different interest groups are constantly in conflict as they compete for power and scarce organizational resources. To obtain these resources interest groups are continually forming coalitions, which dissolve and reform into new configurations as the issues at hand shift...The political frame helped to capture and organize elements such as coalition alignment, re-alignment, affiliations; power brokering; and influencing negotiation and conflict (p.18).

Charting the path of least resistance, university administrators navigated these institutional waters, choosing targets with perceived organizational inadequacies. Discernible deficiencies included ineffectual departmental leadership, limited numbers of low-profile alumni, and politically inexperienced faculty members.

Vestiges of Taylorism, these institutional changes signal a move to increase existing faculty productivity through the reallocation of teaching loads. Often targeted for low enrollment, eliminated departments must nonetheless redistribute their students to existing units (Brint et al., 2005; June, 2012b). As substantiated by noted organizational scholar Gareth Morgan (2006):

Interestingly, [Frederick] Taylor’s principles have crossed many ideological barriers, being extensively used in the former USSR and Eastern Europe as well as in capitalist countries. This fact signifies that Taylorism is as much a tool for securing general control over the workplace as it is a means of generating profit (p.25).
Realities of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century academic marketplace, the aforementioned themes are not exclusive to Mountain University, but are rather a function of a business-model approach to resource allocation in publically funded institutions.

**Implications for Theory**

As predicted, the Bordia et al. (2004) theoretical framework transferred creditably to a similar public setting. Though quantitative in its orientation, Bordia et al.’s concepts of strategic and structural uncertainty resonated with faculty narrators. Reinforced by scholars’ strategic speculation in Units 1 and 2, the strategic planning process stifled this type of uncertainty in Units 3 and 4. Forced to abandon their familiar departmental organization, faculty members in Units 3 and 4 struggled to adapt to the college’s new structure. Able to retain their departmental chairpersons, faculty members in Units 1 and 2 made less frequent mention of structural disruption.

While the Bordia et al. (2004) theoretical framework exhibited strong explanatory powers with respect to strategic and structural uncertainty, job-related uncertainty proved the weakest analytical component. As illustrated in Table 8, a unit’s status as “saved” or “eliminated” had little perceptual bearing on faculty members’ job security, promotion opportunities, or changes to the job role. The lone caveat in this regard concerned increased class sizes—a charge voiced across all four academic units. However, these attempts at scholastic efficiency come at a steep price. As advanced by Fethke and Policano (2012):

Picture the faculty as allocating 60 percent of its time to teaching and 40 percent to research, with this proportion remaining fixed regardless of faculty size. In this case, the compound product of the university is a “tightly bundled” combination of instruction and research. Changes in faculty size affect the level of output, but the proportion of time allocated to research and teaching is fixed (p.74).
A non-academic model, the Bordia et al. (2004) framework must be adapted and refined in order to increase its applicability to university settings. As suggested by the findings of the present study, faculty rank may hold greater explanatory powers than faculty tenure status alone. While non-tenured faculty undoubtedly experienced greater levels of job-related uncertainty when compared to tenured faculty, an analysis of individual commentary supports additional conclusions. In this regard, full professorship appears to be a mitigating factor with respect to job-related uncertainty—a component worthy of further theoretical exploration.

**Implications for Practice**

Pertinent points explicated in the preceding section call attention to the need for heightened faculty participation in institutional governance. Though many scholars “succumb to the temptation to shirk administrative service,” Ginsberg (2011) makes a compelling argument for faculty advocacy:

> While we worked on our books and taught our classes, our universities hired dozens of new vice provosts and associate provosts and hundreds of new deanlets. Administrators used our absence and the absence of some of our colleagues to strengthen their own managerial capabilities and their continuing capacity to circumvent and marginalize the faculty (p.210).

As acknowledged by Dr. James (pp.165-166): “None of the faculty were at the [governing body] meeting” when Mountain University administration presented the new collegiate reporting structure. It stands to reason that had a contingent of collegiate faculty attended this meeting, and voiced their concerns during the public comment period, the governing body would have had an obligation to take this additional perspective into consideration. Indeed, abstention from university and department-level service opens the floodgates to political chicanery. As stated in Chapter 5 of the
There shall be no reconsideration of the policy decisions to declare a financial exigency, to discontinue or reduce in size an administrative unit, project, program or curriculum because of financial exigency or to discontinue, reduce in size or reorganize an administrative unit, project, program or curriculum because of curricular reasons (p.10).

A troubling pronouncement, this instantiation vests final oversight of curricular matters in college/university administration, effectively circumscribing faculty input. Formerly the exclusive purview of faculty (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007), administrators have virtually foreclosed all rebuttals to institutional decision-making in the Mountain System of Higher Education.

Confronted with carte blanche decision-making authority, faculty members may only challenge their individual employment status, as opposed to challenging the legitimacy of financial exigency or the departmental/programmatic discontinuance process (Governing Body Bylaws, 2012). As substantiated in Chapter 5: “The faculty member requesting reconsideration (of their employment status during a financial exigency or curricular review) has the burden of showing that the decision to furlough, reduce pay or to lay off cannot be sustained” (p.10). Though the system does provide for faculty input via “one or more employment review committees,” the “president shall determine the number of persons to serve on each committee, shall determine their terms of service, shall choose the chair of the committee, and, in addition, shall choose one half of the remaining membership of each committee” (p.10). Given these guidelines, it is unlikely that institutional faculty could overcome administrative momentum.
Despite the severity of these challenges, faculty members in Mountain State and across the country have battled back against the erosion of tenure protections and arbitrary institutional decision-making (Berrett, 2011; Etchison, 2012; Glenn, 2011; Schmidt, 2012; Wilson, 2011). Harnessing the power of the press, professors at Mountain University have advanced their cause via the student newspaper (Etchison, 2012) and widely circulated trade publications (Berrett, 2011; Dr. Smith, 2011; Glenn, 2011). Two thousand miles east at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, the Department of Theater mounted a spirited defense of their discipline when faced with curricular review. In defense of her unit and traditional academic governance, longtime professor Deborah Bell boldly declared: “A university is not a corporation” (Wilson, 2011, A14). Railing against “inaccurate data and poor communication,” UNC Theater faculty countered by making their case in a front page article in The Chronicle of Higher Education—the nation’s premiere source on the status of the profession (Wilson, 2011).

Though much remains to be accomplished in terms of restoring and enhancing shared governance, pockets of resistance have appeared on the academic horizon. Most notably, the AAUP has promised “big changes in its leadership and overall direction” with new president Rudy H. Fichtenbaum. A professor of economics at Wright State University (Ohio), Dr. Fichtenbaum “played a central role in last year’s successful campaign for an Ohio ballot measure that repealed a state law preventing many faculty members at public colleges from being involved in collective bargaining.” Furthermore, the new AAUP president is committed to “expanding its membership among not just professors but also adjunct instructors and graduate students, and trying to strengthen the organization’s ties to other labor unions and to education-advocacy groups” (Schmidt,
Referring to the welcome emergence of “critical university studies,” chronicle.com commentator “Cewatt” offered the following endorsement:

I do not consider this criticism of higher education a negative evolution. We need scholars across all levels and disciplines speaking out about the changes occurring in academe. We must guard our right to speak out and keep our jobs, something in increasing jeopardy. We must speak out—against abuses by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, U.S. News & World Report, corporate donors. This is how we continue to grow (2012, B18).

A sobering reminder of a tenuous academic freedom, scholars must exercise their rights to free speech before they are circumscribed in writing.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

A counter to the “functionalist paradigm,” Kezar (2012) distinguishes interpretive studies as:

foreground[ing] language, discourse, and communication patterns: the interpersonal meaning of change, the symbolic significance; the implications of change for affected cultures and individuals, social background of actors and the role of history and culture; and performance of organizational actors (pp.183, 188).

Grounded in the qualitative traditions of phenomenology and ethnography, these methodological approaches:

focus on those experiencing the change, trying to understand their perspectives and how they make meaning of a change process. These studies help illuminate the role of resistance or barriers to change because changes are not well understood or are considered poor by others in the organization. Through these investigations of other actors, interpretive studies also identify new agents of change—without positions of authority—and demonstrate how they are part of a shared or distributed change process (Kezar, 2012, p.188).

As illustrated in Appendix F, two and a half months elapsed between the December 1, 2010 forecast of future state revenues and Mountain University’s initial presidential announcement declaring the possibility of financial exigency. Though this timeframe coincided with Winter Break, budgetary discussions could have begun despite this

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impediment. Provided advances in technology, Mountain University could easily have distributed financial documentation and fiscal updates via institutional email accounts, website postings, or live streaming video. Though Mountain University did make use of these communicative mediums, faculty members in the present study continuously decried the poor communication and mixed messages of institutional reorganization. Provided these assertions, future research avenues include more effective and transparent bureaucratic communication methods, with special attention given to communication during organizational change.

In a separate though equally important vein, several scholars have posited that institutional downsizing disproportionately affects liberal arts and creative disciplines (Brint et al., 2005; Brint et al., 2012; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Ginsberg, 2011; Massy, 2001; Slaughter, 1993; Zusman, 2005). As emphasized by Christensen and Eyring (2011):

The cutting of budgets and outright closure of university presses makes it harder for scholars to publish books even through less prestigious channels. This matters especially to tenure-track faculty in the humanities, for whom publishing books is the ultimate test of scholarship (p.364).

Moreover, in the exercise of competing for students, “many schools have invested heavily in lovely dormitories, dining facilities, and garages while closing language and philosophy departments for budgetary reasons” (Ginsberg, 2011, p.169). Though a burgeoning body of knowledge strongly suggests that institutional resource reallocation favors investment in student services at the expense of the liberal arts, empirical scholarship could confirm or deny this critical hypothesis. For example, a quantitative research design could longitudinally analyze institutional resource allocation over a fixed period of time (5 years, 10 years, etc.), examining full-time faculty lines, managerial
budgets, and graduate assistant/postdoctoral allocations, etc. Further, non-parametric frontier modeling in the form of Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) has proven an effective means of gauging funding adequacy in the K-12 arena—with potentially promising applicability to higher education settings (Ruggiero, 2007). Alternative qualitative designs could generally mirror the case study methodology employed in the present study, with minimal adjustments for phenomenological or grounded theory approaches (Creswell, 2007).

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention the effect of institutional downsizing on students enrolled in eliminated departments/programs. As referenced by Dr. Hayes on pages 130-131, Mountain University has increasingly turned to student workers to replace lost administrative support staff. While part-time on-campus employment can be a positive and rewarding experience, Mountain University and colleges across the country must be careful not to exploit student labor in order to enhance institutional profit margins. Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests that students enrolled in eliminated and potentially eliminated departments/programs experience uncertainties equal to or greater than the faculty members housed in said units. As reinforced by academician Bettina Drew: “Students are unsuspecting consumers in a financial endeavor in which their satisfaction plays no role” (p.B20). Collateral damage in institutional power plays, students often bear the burden of accelerated programs of study, diminished human (i.e. faculty, staff) resources, and emotional distress. Future research angles may include individual/multiple case studies of student(s) in eliminated or potentially eliminated units, as well as phenomenological approaches to similar lines of inquiry.
Conclusion

A distressing development in American higher education, departmental and programmatic eliminations are by no means unstoppable phenomenon. Though historical reflection reinforces universities’ “stubborn resistance to systemic change,” the continued commitment to this ideology may result in further erosion of the liberal arts foundation (Marcus, 2011, p.44). Referred to as “currency,” departmental prestige increasingly reflects entrepreneurial research orientation, with the greatest favor bestowed upon faculties with high volumes of external grant funding (Fethke & Policano, 2012, p. 172). In addition, branch campuses, such as the University of North Texas at Dallas, have hired management consultants to whittle the curriculum down to “a narrow set of career-focused majors in fields like business, information technology, and criminal justice,” and refashion the academic calendar into a “year-round trimester” system (Blumenstyk, 2012, A14).

In a popular website entitled “Junct Rebellion” (in re: adjunct), an enlightened blogger summarizes “How the American University was Killed, in Five Easy Steps”:

First, you defund public higher education.

Second, you deprofessionalize and impoverish the professors.

Step #3: You move in a managerial/administrative class who take over governance of the university.

Step Four: You move in corporate culture and corporate money.

Step Five – Destroy the Students

A disenfranchised voice within the academy, adjunct professors must be seen as allies, rather than opposition, in the fight to reclaim shared academic governance. As
underscored by Zumeta, Breneman, Callan, and Finney (2012), the strength of America’s universities has high-stakes implications:

After remarkable gains in American educational attainment for the baby-boom generation, more recent performance in higher education indicators has been considerably less impressive. Whereas the United States had long been the world leader in higher education participation and attainment rates, other nations have now caught up and even exceeded the U.S. rates for young adults (p.5).

Declines in the literacy and mathematical skill sets of U.S. college graduates portend an uphill battle for intellectual relevance in an increasingly globalized economy (Zumeta et al., 2012). Long at the forefront of American innovation, U.S. colleges and universities must again reclaim this intellectual high-ground, or continue to witness the decline of America’s preeminence in higher education.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR “SAVED” DEPARTMENT CHAIR

1. When did you find out that this unit may be eliminated?
   a. How did you find out about the possibility of elimination?

2. Why do you think this unit was slated for elimination?

3. Why do you think that this unit was saved from elimination?

4. How have these events impacted you and the faculty in your unit?
   a. Have reporting structures changed?

5. How has the functionality of your unit changed?

6. How has your job role changed as a result of these events?

7. How do you perceive your future at this institution given this budgetary context?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR “SAVED” FACULTY MEMBERS

1. When did you find out that this unit may be eliminated?
   a. How did you find out about the possibility of elimination?

2. Why do you think this unit was slated for elimination?

3. Why do you think that this unit was saved from elimination?

4. How have these events impacted you?
   a. Have reporting structures changed?

5. How has the functionality of your unit changed?

6. How has your job role changed as a result of these events?

7. How do you perceive your future at this institution given this budgetary context?
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR “ELIMINATED” DEPARTMENT CHAIR

1. When did you find out that this unit may be eliminated?
   a. How did you find out about the possibility of elimination?

2. Why do you think this unit was slated for elimination?

3. Why do you think that this unit was ultimately eliminated?

4. How have these events impacted you and the faculty in your unit?
   a. Have reporting structures changed?

5. How has the functionality of your unit changed?

6. How has your job role changed as a result of these events?

7. How do you perceive your future at this institution given this budgetary context?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR “ELIMINATED” FACULTY MEMBERS

1. When did you find out that this unit may be eliminated?
   a. How did you find out about the possibility of elimination?

2. Why do you think this unit was slated for elimination?

3. Why do you think that this unit was ultimately eliminated?

4. How have these events impacted you?
   a. Have reporting structures changed?

5. How has the functionality of your unit changed?

6. How has your job role changed as a result of these events?

7. How do you perceive your future at this institution given this budgetary context?
APPENDIX E

EXPLICATION OF DATA ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Theme Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How do individuals experience a potential departmental/programmatic elimination?</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: To what extent do strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties manifest themselves during potential departmental/programmatic eliminations?</td>
<td>Theory-Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: How does the department chair affect faculty perceptions of strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainties?</td>
<td>Emergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4: How does strategic, structural, and job-related uncertainty differ between saved and eliminated units?</td>
<td>Cross-Case Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example of Emergent Analysis**

*Dr. Covey:* “It doesn’t do any good to whine. That’s what I used to tell my kids. “We don’t whine in this house.” We fought a good battle and I came here to a very bright future. It didn’t work out that way. It’s okay. I go home at night, sleep good.”

I thematically categorized this statement as an example of the department chair’s realistic outlook, based upon Berg’s (2007) definitions of latent and manifest messaging.

**Example of Theory-driven Analysis**

*Dr. Grant:* “Because, you know, at this point in my career, I’m pretty secure in terms of being a tenured full professor and having enough financial resources that I could resign or retire, as they say, anytime I want.”

I thematically categorized this statement as job-related uncertainty (*job security*), based upon the definitions advanced by Bordia et al. (2004).
## APPENDIX F

### TIMELINE OF THE 2011-2013 BIENNIAL BUDGET PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Mountain State</th>
<th>Mountain University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1, 2010</td>
<td>Economic Forum forecasts precipitous decline in state general fund revenue for 2011-2013 biennium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20, 2011</td>
<td>Governor submits Executive Budget to state legislature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 7, 2011</td>
<td>State legislative session opens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>President warns Faculty Senate of possible need to declare financial exigency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provost directs Deans to make vertical cuts to meet individual college budget reduction targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 25, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dean’s budget reduction proposals due to Provost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mountain State System of Higher Education issues legal opinion on tenure; tenure resides in the department, not the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>President announces first budget reduction proposal via email; meets 60% of funding reduction recommended by Governor’s executive budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22, 2011</td>
<td>Joint legislative finance committee on higher education requests cut proposals from Mountain State System of Higher Education institutions that meet 100% of the governor’s recommended funding reductions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28, 2011</td>
<td>Budget reduction proposal which meets 100% of funding reduction recommended by Governor’s executive budget due to the legislature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29, 2011</td>
<td>Department/program elimination proposal discussed at special meeting of the Faculty Senate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30, 2011</td>
<td>President announces second budget reduction proposal via email; meets 100% of funding reduction recommended by Governor’s executive budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 2011</td>
<td>President directs Deans to consult with faculty and staff as to how to best meet budget reduction targets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29, 2011</td>
<td>Dean’s revised budget reduction proposals due to Provost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2, 2011</td>
<td>Economic Forum revises state general fund revenue forecast for 2011-2013 biennium; $274 million in additional revenue available to the state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3, 2011</td>
<td>Provost announces third budget reduction proposal via email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 2011</td>
<td>President announces Tenured Faculty Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (TFVSIP) in order to limit the need to terminate tenured faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23, 2011</td>
<td>TFVSIP applications due; 48 tenured faculty accept one-time buy-out of 150% of base salary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26, 2011</td>
<td>Mountain State Supreme Court rules that the state cannot appropriate monies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 2011</td>
<td>Legislature and governor approve 2011-2013 biennial budget.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 6, 2011</td>
<td>State legislative session adjourns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8, 2011</td>
<td>President announces fourth budget reduction proposal at campus town hall meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17, 2011</td>
<td>Mountain State System of Higher Education governing body votes to accept the tuition increases, budget reductions, and department/program eliminations proposed by Mountain University to meet the final legislative budget.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 6, 2011</td>
<td>President thanks TFVSIP participants and credits them with saving tenured and non-tenured positions; no new budget proposal announced to reflect these savings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 18, 2011</td>
<td>President announces that “for all intents and purposes the budget cuts are done”; no budget proposal accounts for the implementation of these changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9, 2011</td>
<td>Mountain State System of Higher Education governing body votes to accept additional department/program eliminations proposed by Mountain University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Mountain University] is a research institution committed to rigorous educational programs and the highest standards of a liberal education. We produce accomplished graduates who are well prepared to enter the work force or to continue their education in graduate and professional programs. Our faculty, students, and staff enthusiastically confront the challenges of economic and cultural diversification, urban growth, social justice, and sustainability. Our commitment to our dynamic region and State centrally influences our research and educational programs, which improves our local communities.

Our commitment to the national and international communities ensures that our research and educational programs engage both traditional and innovative areas of study and global concerns. [Mountain University’s] distinctive identity and values permeate a unique institution that brings the best of the world to our region and, in turn, produces knowledge to improve the region and world around us.

[Mountain University] is committed to and driven by these shared values that will guide our decision making:

- High expectations for student learning and success;
- Discovery through research, scholarship, and creative activity;
- Nurturing equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment;
- Social, environmental, and economic sustainability;
- Strong, reciprocal, and interdependent relationships between [Mountain University] and the region around us;
- An entrepreneurial, innovative, and unconventional spirit.
APPENDIX H

MOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 & 4 COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PEST ANALYSIS

The PEST Analysis is a specific look at four areas critical to the development of the Strategic Plan. The information draws from the individuals, groups and organizations that provided feedback.

| POLITICAL | • Significant political battle between the governor and the higher education system over funding  
• Legislature is seriously divided over funding higher education  
• Concern that the politics of cutbacks and reductions are driving the agenda of the College and University  
• [Governing body] support is critical at this time to represent and advocate the value of higher education  
• Political pressure and tension is creating divisiveness in the University and the College  
• Proactive leadership at [Mountain University] and the College is important to build political/public support |
|---|---|
| ECONOMIC | • Continued weak national economy prolongs recovery of [the College’s discipline] in [Mountain State]  
• Protracted recovery mean fewer jobs available for graduates  
• State budget cuts are having significant impact on students, faculty, course availability, etc.  
• Rising financial costs for tuition, fees and books will prevent some from enrolling  
• Decreasing resources are impacting support for the students  
• The need for other funding sources is critical for long term success of the College |
| SOCIAL | • Tremendous growth and prosperity in the past has made adjustment more difficult to the current realities  
• [Mountain University] is a “commuter school”- not a lot of social activities to keep students on campus  
• College has no central area, “hub” to stimulate interaction/gatherings  
• Many students must work while in school, don’t feel involved  
• Limited opportunity for faculty/student interaction outside of classroom  
• Location of offices and organizations that support students, spread out/not effectively located  
• Communication is inconsistent/ineffective in keeping College community engaged/informed  
• Limited use of social networks by the College  
• Alumni and industry leaders not actively involved enough given the location of the College |
| TECHNOLOGY | • Class rooms have limited technology to support student/faculty needs  
• College has a minimal IT infrastructure  
• The industry is utilizing state of the art technology, but the College does not have resources to support similar efforts  
• Use of technology and web based tools is increasingly important to the [College’s disciplinary affiliation]  
• Lack of state of the art technology marginalizes effectiveness of the College, faculty, staff  
• You can’t be a world class College if your technology is limited, obsolete |
APPENDIX I

MOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY

UNIT 3 & 4 COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT Analysis is a specific look at four areas critical to the development of the Strategic Plan. The information draws from the individuals, groups and organizations that provided feedback.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Proximity to [Unit 3 &amp; 4 industry]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct involvement with industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The “living laboratory” of [Mountain City]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Motivated and dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty and Staff</strong></td>
<td>Strong and committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive industry experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaders in the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledgeable and respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research/Teaching/Service</strong></td>
<td>Excellent reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authors of leading publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships – Alumni/Industry</strong></td>
<td>Over 11,000 graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry leaders available/accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>History of donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More affordable than many other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>schools/colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities/Space</strong></td>
<td>Have [strategic roadway] to use as annex to campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Over 40 years of delivering quality education in the field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Underutilizing location and proximity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>International students poorly assimilated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAKNESSES</td>
<td>OPPORTUNITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course schedules, curriculum overly complicated/not user friendly</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors often unavailable</td>
<td>Increase profile/visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty and Staff</strong></td>
<td>Improve interaction with leading [industry professionals]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisiveness, bickering, “turf wars”</td>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of faculty development</td>
<td>Can significantly increase their involvement with the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research/Teaching/Service</strong></td>
<td><strong>Faculty and Staff</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency in teaching effectiveness</td>
<td>Develop more training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research not well funded</td>
<td>Provide more resources/support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough “hands on” learning</td>
<td><strong>Research/Teaching/Service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships – Alumni/Industry</strong></td>
<td>Research support could be significantly increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough involvement with alumni/industry leaders</td>
<td>Improve teaching methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective communication</td>
<td><strong>Relationships – Alumni/Industry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>More involvement can increase communication and teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak financial base, over reliance on eroding State budget</td>
<td>[Strategic location] could be used much more efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities/Space</strong></td>
<td>Many alumni active in industry and still live in [Mountain City]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities dated/not professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few places for interaction among students/faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational effectiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inefficient structure/Organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited support/training for staff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>THREATS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>Increase resources/support funding, less dependence on State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities/Space</strong></td>
<td>New academic building [Industry] campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>With budget cuts, chance to streamline Get back to basics/focus on core mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Failure to make changes will continue to erode support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Lack of rigor will erode quality Poor assimilation of international students will impact all students A lack of focus on quality will prevent significant improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty and Staff</strong></td>
<td>Continued divisiveness/resistance to change erodes credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research/Teaching/Service</strong></td>
<td>Continued cutbacks prevent attracting new quality faculty Potential loss of existing faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships – Alumni/Industry</strong></td>
<td>Alumni and industry leaders might continue to feel uninvolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial</strong></td>
<td>Continued bad economy will effect programs/curriculum Bad economy limits jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities/Space</strong></td>
<td>Failure to build new academic building will be a limiting factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Lack of new organization structure will impede effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership  December 2012
Emphasis: Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Master of Arts in History  August 2009
Major: American History 1877-present
Minor: American Studies
University of South Florida at Tampa

Bachelor of Arts, Magna cum Laude  August 2006
Major: History
Minor: Criminology
University of South Florida at Tampa

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

National Science Foundation  July 2012-Aug. 2012
College of Arts & Sciences
New York University, NY
- As part of the ADVANCE grant evaluation team, I conducted interviews of NSF ADVANCE grant recipients as to the benefits/pitfalls of particular professional development opportunities for women in the sciences
- Prepared final evaluation report for distribution to NSF and NYU project stakeholders; the purpose of this evaluation was to explore ways to expand the pipeline of female faculty members in scientific disciplines

Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Conducted faculty interviews and gathered pertinent documentation for inclusion in a multiple case study entitled: “Closing up Shop: Meditations on the Departmental/Programmatic Elimination Experience”
- Dissertation successfully defended October 15, 2012

Graduate Research Assistant to the Department Chair  Aug. 2010-Aug. 2011
Department of Educational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Conducted institutional research analysis for a campus-wide efficiency study as it pertained to statewide budget reductions
- Contributed report-writing and editing efforts to the aforementioned efficiency study

Graduate Research Assistant Aug. 2009-Aug. 2010
Financial Aid & Scholarships
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Conducted research on loan default prevention in an effort to lower the institutional default rate
- Contributed report-writing and editing efforts to institutional publications in order to provide accurate financial information to the student body

Salem Law Group
Tampa, Florida
- Conducted legislative, legal, and institutional research analysis for a blind senior partner
- Reviewed and responded to requests for proposal as they pertained to areas of governmental law practiced by the firm

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
EDH 703: History of American Higher Education (Doctoral Level) Fall 2011
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Co-taught with Dr. Vicki Rosser as part of a doctoral internship
- Developed curriculum, assignments, and learning objectives
- Guest lectured on aspects of race, class, and gender in higher education

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE
Graduate Assistant to the Department Chair Aug. 2012-present
Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Provide assistance with departmental record-keeping, professional development, and project management
- Develop doctoral-level content for the following courses: History of Higher Education, Academic Governance, Qualitative Case Study Methodology

Center Manager Aug. 2011-April 2012
Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Contributing writer and editor of grant proposals, technical reports, and stakeholder summaries
• Managed campus-wide student course evaluation database, providing reports to faculty as to their instructional ratings
• Accounted for and complied with external funding sources, ensuring adherence to all federal and institutional expenditure policies

Coordinator of Employer Relations  Sept. 2007-May 2008
Career Center  
University of South Florida at St. Petersburg  
• Planned and executed the annual campus career fair, networking with the local business community and student job-seekers in an effort to increase attendance  
• Collaborated with faculty in the College of Arts & Sciences to create new for-credit internship opportunities for affiliated students  
• Managed the Career Center’s secure employment database, linking qualified students to eligible local and national employers

Assistant to the Regional Vice Chancellor  March 2007-Sept. 2007
Office of Student Affairs  
University of South Florida at St. Petersburg  
• Preserved confidential student files and correspondence, identified strategies for efficiency and ease of operations, scheduled meetings, conferences, and travel, and acted as point-person for university event planning

PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Donoff, S. (November 2012). Closing up Shop: Meditations on the departmental/programmatic elimination experience. Presented at the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA), Las Cruces, NM.

Donoff, S. B. & Rosser, V.J. (April 2013). I heard it through the grapevine: Conversations on academic attrition. To be presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), San Francisco, CA.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Clark County, NV
- Election Board Officer, Presidential Election (2012)
- Clark County Museum, Volunteer Archivist (2012)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
- Graduate Student Policy Seminar Attendee (2010)
- Council on Ethnic Participation Pre-Conference Evaluation Consultant (2011)
- IPEDS workshop proposal reviewer (2011)
- Annual conference session chair (2012)

Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA)
- Member (2012)

American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- Member (2012)