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My Voice Matters: A Telling Case Study of Student Voice in Institutional Governance

Eboni Monique Caridine

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MY VOICE MATTERS: A TELLING CASE STUDY OF STUDENT
VOICE IN INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

My Voice Matters:
A Telling Case Study of Student Voice in Institutional Governance
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Higher education institutions are complex institutions that are often difficult to navigate. Additionally, the policies and procedures that govern these institutions have the potential to exclude the student's voice. Understanding the power relations and hierarchical structures that exist within the institutions presents another difficult avenue to navigate for students. It is imperative that institutions understand their role in educating students to be civic-minded individuals with the cognitive ability to assist in making informed decisions.

Several scholars (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Crane, 1969; McGrath, 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige, 1971; May, 2010) describe a time where student input was valued and deemed a necessity with curriculum reform, financial policies, and day to day operations of the institution. Utilizing Organizational Role Theory and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development, this dissertation will explore how undergraduate students in a Student Government Association are participating in the informal and formal decision making process at their respective institution. Through a historical view of the literature surrounding student governance, student experiences and perceptions of roles will be explored while discussing the shift in student power throughout the history of higher education. I will conclude with recommendations to improve policy and practice.

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“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today” – Malcolm X

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength to do something that seems impossible for a lot of people. Secondly, I would like to thank my parents, Keith and Dorothy Caridine for their undying support during this journey. Their sacrifice to help get me to this stage in my life is unimaginable and does not go unnoticed. I promise to continue to make you all proud and to continue to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves. I thank you for instilling the drive, confidence, and grit that it took to get to this stage in my career. To my brother, Robert Caridine, thank you for supporting me and helping with the formatting of this paper. To my sister in law, thank you for always giving me an encouraging word throughout this process.

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This dissertation is also dedicated to every child that has been told that they are not capable of greatness. I vow to spend the rest of my career helping you realize your self-worth and helping you find your voice to stand up for what you believe. Remember to surround yourself with like-minded individuals that will encourage you to achieve your dreams, push you when you've lost your fight, and be honest with you when you've lost focus on your goals.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Overview

Student governance has an extensive history tracing back to the 1800s where students influenced curriculum, finances, and overall operations of a university (McGrath, 1970). Currently, stories of student governance are discussed in the realm of problems and issues that emerge on campuses. Media coverage continually highlights student protest and campus unrest across the nation. Many of these issues typically lead to a discussion about the lack of student's voice in decisions regarding institutional policies, operations, and governance of an institution. For this study, institutional governance refers to the systemic nature of how operations are conducted within an institution (AGB statement, 1998). Research on this topic varies in that scholars discuss the roles of student governance concerning student self-governance (May, 2010) or student leaders (McGrath, 1970). However, specific literature regarding students participating in institutional governance through a Student Government Association (SGA) is limited or focused on one particular university. Additionally, the extent of these studies appears to be related to isolated incidents that occur on campus and linked to an unjust action or a series of dreadful events.

Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) allude to the decline and limited research in this area by suggesting that student involvement in campus governance saw a drastic decrease in the late 1970s and 1980s in the United States and has never recovered. This decline leaves some researchers to wonder if it were due to a lack of interest, institutional experiences that prevented involvement, or a combination of other factors (McGrath, 1970; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Planas, Soler, Fullana, Pallisera, & Vila 2011). Planas, et al. (2011) associate the lack of participation in

institutional governance to the misinformation that students have about the platforms available to them to participate in governance. Therefore, this case study will seek to explore one of those platforms, Student Government Associations (SGAs), to understand how those students are integrated into campus governance processes at an institution.

Significance of Topic

Higher education institutions are complex organizations that are often difficult to navigate. For instance, most policies and procedures that govern these institutions are deeply rooted in management practices that have the potential to exclude student input, specifically undergraduates. Although not intentional, the jargon used to explain university policies and procedures can be overwhelming to students. Understanding power relations and governance structures that exist within these institutions are vital to gaining access to spaces of authority.

Thus, providing research regarding activities and action items of an SGA and its members has the potential to reform an institutional approach to student involvement and challenge them to revisit how students are integrated into campus governance processes. Research suggests that students who are more involved in their college or university perform better academically and retention and graduation rates for their institution increases (McGrath, 1970; Rodriguez & Villarreal, 2012). This observation should encourage institutions to evaluate their current practices around student involvement. This topic was chosen to inform administrators of the importance of enhancing or restoring student voice in decisions affecting an institution.

From this study, data collected will help administrators be more aware of their role in educating students to be critical thinkers and civic-minded individuals with the ability to assist in making informed decisions in matters that involve governance of an institution or organization.

Results from this study reinforce the notion that skills acquired from interacting with faculty and staff not only benefits students but also institutions as they are producing a more well-rounded student. The sections below illustrate the reasons why this topic is significant to the field of higher education.

Benefits of integration. By integrating students into campus governance processes at an institution, students are developing critical thinking and decision-making skills outside of the confinement of a traditional classroom. Facilitating this process illustrates that an institution values student input and recognizes they are an asset to the functionality of an institution.

Rodriguez and Villarreal (2012) support this perspective in the following quote:

A systemic view of policy and practice change requires inclusion of the most important stakeholders in the educational process: the students. Student voices are fundamentally critical in any successful school reform effort. If we want to reduce student attrition and ensure greater participation and engagement of students resulting in higher academic achievement and college readiness, we must listen to them, gain their confidence and commitment, and collaboratively set goals and objectives (p.1).

Encouraging students to express their opinions and viewpoints in campus governance ultimately benefits the university on a variety of levels. According to Rodriguez and Villarreal (2012), the positive inclusion of students in governance increases retention and graduation rates. As retention and graduation rates rise, the prestige of an institution increases and so does the recruitment and retention of distinguished faculty and staff. Increasing the intellectual capacity of an institution increases rigor in the curriculum, which in turn provides a better equipped graduate to the workforce. In addition to the tangible benefits, including students in this endeavor also helps to build a sense of community and social capital between administrators and students (Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). Creating this sense of community helps students develop a sense of ownership and pride in their institution.

Facilitating a discussion between faculty, staff, and students around campus governance helps faculty and administrators engage in mentoring as well as build a professional network for students. Integrating them into governance processes allows students to gain access to social and human capital that may otherwise be unattainable or unavailable (McGrath 1970; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). For some students, building a relationship with administrators or faculty may be their first professional interaction. Examining this interaction is essential in understanding whether or not it increases a student's interest in campus governance. This study will explore perceptions of the importance of these relationships and interactions. The results of this study could lead to new developments in the area of student engagement, involvement, and the importance of faculty-student mentoring relationships in higher education.

Demographic shift and political literacy. Since student governance was first studied, higher education institutions have drastically changed. This change is noticeable in institutional practices and culture as well as in those who attend them. Institutional governance structures are becoming more complex and intricate as they seek to educate an increasingly diverse population. A shift in demographics and characteristics among students around the country should spark a need for an assessment of how students are becoming active participants in campus governance and an examination of those platforms available to them. A significant reason for this integration is to assist students in developing their political literacy. The concept of political literacy refers to

...the skills of inquiry needed to understand the ways in which power operates in democratic and autocratic social contexts. The aim is to acquire basic knowledge gained through a critical reading of the way institutions function and an understanding of how democracy works in practice as the local, national, and global levels (Moodley, 2012, p.1).

Creating or enhancing political literacy in students' helps to mold a holistic, civic-minded individual that is equipped to understand the bureaucratic environment of a larger society. By

providing this service, colleges and universities are in turn improving the workforce and contributing to the personal and professional development of students. Through this development, students are translating knowledge gained into professional practice.

Institutional commitment and structures. The AGB Statement on Institutional Governance (1998) urges institutions to be intentional and clear about their governance structures and any organizational policies that may derive from those structures. Informing students of the mechanisms available to them to participate in the campus governance processes is a crucial component and vital to their growth as a college student.

One problem that may hinder the integration of students in governance is in the ways that institutions are structured. An institution will typically provide a general outline of its governance structure in its mission and vision statements. Mission statements should give the outsiders a blueprint of an institution's goals, objectives, and commitment to the community (Bess & Dee, 2008; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). However, depending on the structure in place and the culture of an institution, administrators employed under a specific governance model may or may not understand the importance of including students in the campus governance processes. The various levels of institutional governance models and the advantages and disadvantages of each will be discussed later in Chapter 2.

Holding institutions accountable for including students in the decision-making process is vital to the mission of higher education and the key to holistically educating students. Institutions are no longer able to ignore the voice of the students in the governance of institutions. As history has proven, ignoring their voice leads to a disengaged student, protest, riots, sit-ins, and is an overall disadvantage for a student that is expected to become a productive citizen in society (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Horowitz & Friedland 1970; McGrath, 1970; Horowitz, 1987). Also,

it has the potential to cause a decrease in institutional productivity, enrollment, prestige, and the recruitment of staff and faculty. When an institution has a shared governance model and is collaborative among faculty, staff, and students, all vested parties' benefit. By analyzing student members of a SGA, recommendations will be provided to institutions for improving collaboration among administrators and students in the decision-making process. Additionally, the study seeks to add depth to the current literature on student participation in campus governance.

The aforementioned is why studying this topic is relevant to the field of higher education. Since students are a primary stakeholder in higher education, their input should be valued within an institution. Platforms that are provided to facilitate this interaction should be examined for effectiveness and usefulness regularly. Without students to educate, institutions will cease to exist. Therefore, the operations and governance of an institution should be conscious of the student's voice. The next section will provide an overview of the theoretical framework that will be used to guide this study and analyze any data that will be collected.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework that guided this study is Role Theory (RT). To support RT's components, Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development conceptual model was utilized to discuss the intellectual development that occurs during undergraduate years that validates their potential ability to participate in governance. RT is a social psychology theory commonly used in business management (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Levinson, 1965; Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970; Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). Using RT to explore behaviors and expectations of students and institutions provided context into various roles of those involved in the governance process. The literature suggests among complex organizations and members of

those organizations, role ambiguity and conflict will emerge (Kahn, et al., 1964; Rizzo, et al., 1970; Sell, et al., 1981). Exploring roles of authority and power within institutions and its effect on student members of SGA's requires that one analyze the relationships between both subgroups.

Examining role ambiguity and role conflict assisted in understanding whether students know their role in the campus governance process or if competing priorities are preventing their participation. In this study, role conflict was used to explore whether or not students are receiving conflicting messages from various stakeholders regarding their role in campus governance. In addition, role ambiguity was used to investigate whether those messages are clear regarding their power and authority in this process.

Also, RT helped to explore the role of senior administrators in integrating students in the governance process at an institution. By utilizing RT, this study will illustrate how undergraduate student members of SGAs and their respective institutions could have a clearer vision of the opportunities and accountability measures that an institution has in place to facilitate their participation in the governance processes.

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development

In addition to RT, several components of Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development model were utilized. This model discusses the various areas of identity development of college students. This model is not a linear model of development, allowing individuals to master one area over another. However, the seven vectors of identity development are relevant in addressing the critical thinking ability of college-aged students. The seven vectors are: developing competence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; establishing identity; freeing interpersonal relationships; developing purpose;

and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Associates, 1981; Chickering & Reisser 1993).

The specific vectors that were used in this study were: developing competence; moving through autonomy towards interdependence; developing purpose; and developing integrity. These vectors were chosen because the literature suggests that students lack the ability to participate in a higher level decision-making process (McGrath, 1970; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). However, this conceptual model showed that students may begin to develop the abilities and skills needed to participate in campus governance effectively.

Purpose

Utilizing aspects of Role Theory (RT) and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development, this multi-site, embedded telling case study explored how undergraduate students participate in campus governance through Student Government Associations (SGAs) across various institutional types (i.e., a Bachelor/Associate degree granting institution and a Doctoral degree granting institution with very high research activity), and investigated the various roles that students played in the informal or formal governance processes at their respective institution.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore how undergraduate SGA members are integrated into the campus governance processes at an institution. This study is an exploratory, multiple site embedded case study (Yin, 2014). A qualitative method was chosen for a variety of reasons: 1) to collect data in an environment that is comfortable for the participants; 2) to observe behavior; 3) to utilize multiple data collection methods that produce rich data and thick descriptions; and 4) to collaborate with participants (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

A case study allows for a more in-depth look into the context and environment in which an organization or a case resides (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The bounded system was comprised of an institutional type, a SGA, undergraduate students in SGAs, and administrators working with SGAs at two institutions during an academic semester.

To extrapolate the data needed, both the Executive Board members and the General Body members of the SGA were interviewed. In addition to speaking with students, staff and administrators who have either previously worked with students in the SGA or are currently working with a SGA were interviewed as well. Participating sites were chosen due to the variance in governance structures of the SGA and overall institution.

Methodology

The justification for choosing a case study centers on an attempt to preserve student's voice and use it to relay perceptions of their roles in the informal and formal governance processes at an institution. By interviewing administrators, this study sought to explore their viewpoints in the value of including students in this process. Also, exploring relationships between SGAs members and the context in which it resides (i.e., institutional type) would best be analyzed using case study methodology.

Once data were collected from both sites, and a within-case analysis was completed, a cross-case analysis was conducted to provide a more comprehensive view of how students were participating in governance across institutional types. A cross-case analysis was completed to determine whether the transient nature of students at a Bachelor/Associate degree granting institution was a factor in how students were participating in campus governance. The next section will discuss the research questions that guided this study. In collaboration with student

governance research, a theoretical framework, and identity development model, the questions below provide an outline of the data that were collected.

Research Questions

Several questions emerged while reviewing the literature that were used to guide this study:

1. What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes?
2. How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in the decision-making processes at their institution?

The research questions above stem from the theoretical framework and identity development conceptual model that was used to examine ambiguity or conflict in how students and administrators perceive their roles in campus governance and if students possess the critical thinking skills to participate in this process. Additionally, the research questions explored interactions between students, administrators, and the overall governance structure of an institution. The latter investigated whether the governance model utilized by an institution is the reason for the inclusion or exclusion of the student's voice. Likewise, gaining insight into other areas where students are participating in the governance process will aid in gauging their willingness and drive to participate in campus governance outside of the realm of a SGA.

Definition of Terms

The following are key terms and definitions that will aid in clarification throughout this study:

Board of Regents: The governing body of the Nevada System of Higher Education that is responsible for the management of the universities under its control (NSHE, 2016)

Bureaucratic Model: The hierarchical relationship that exists among institutional decision makers due to their role within the institution (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013).

Collegiate Model: Sharing the decision making power among faculty as it relates to the profession and the structure of the institution (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013).

Executive Board Members: Student leaders within the student government association that oversees all operations and assessment (UNLV, 2016). Student leaders have the power to conduct business in the best interest of the members of the Student Government Association (CSN, 2014).

Institutional Governance: Governance refers to the systemic nature of how operations are conducted within the institution (AGB Report, 1968); see also "[the process] with which scholars, students, teachers, administrators and trustees associated together in a college or in a university establish and carry out rules and regulations that minimize conflict, facilitate their collaboration, and preserve essential individual freedom" (Corson, 1960, pp. 12-13).

Institutional Type: The classification structure of colleges and universities (CCIHE-IU, 2015).

Political Model: Alluding to the fact that institutions are an extension of the political system (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, and Dorman, 2013).

Student Government Associations (SGA): A tool used to recruit new students, retain existing students, and improve student and alumni involvement. A strong, effective, efficient, and competent student voice is critical to the overall health of any higher-education institution (American Student Government Association, 2016).

Limitations

Limitations are expected in any area of research. The limitations of this study stem from a limited sample size. Considering the unit and sub-units of analysis for the study, the availability of participants that fit the tailored criteria outlined in this design limits the study to pertain to a specific group of people. The sample is particular to members participating in a SGA and is not reflective of the collective student body at an institution. A larger, future mixed method study could seek to survey the larger student body at multiple institutional types across the United States.

An additional potential limitation is accessing the student population that was interviewed and observed. The transient nature of students, precisely at the Bachelor/Associate degree granting institution selected and the term limits of Executive Board members, supported this as a limitation during the data collection process. Depending on when students were contacted for interviews or the document analysis was completed could have led to variance in data collection. Student and administrator's willingness to discuss institutional governance could have been a potential hindrance during the data collection process as well.

Additionally, gaining access to administrators or faculty members that oversee SGAs was anticipated as a limitation as well. Due to a variance of schedules and contracts among administrators, interviewing administrators that have previously worked with the SGA or those that have worked with members of the SGA could have been an additional option if current advisors were not available.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the study being conducted and necessary information regarding its research design. In this chapter the topic was introduced; the

significance of this study to the body of higher education literature was discussed; an overview of previous literature and a theoretical framework and identity development model was provided; a review of the research design and questions was discussed; definitions of key terms were provided; and limitations of the study were outlined. In the following chapter, a more comprehensive literature review will be presented to include a historical perspective on student governance and institutional culture and climate. Various institutional types and governance structures will be described in detail as well.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Intentional or not, the complexity of higher education institutions may create an environment of intimidation for some of its members, mainly undergraduate students. The way an institution is structured and governed can exclude certain members from having input in its operation. Typically, students are a group not included in critical conversations regarding an institution's governance (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; McGrath 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige & Riley 1977; Golden & Schwartz, 1994; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999; May, 2010; Hendrickson et. al., 2013). To become active participants in the governance process at these institutions, students must understand the governance structures, power, and authority that exists within an institution and seek guidance in finding opportunities to be involved. Research indicates that authority regarding institutional governance in higher education institutions predominately reside with administration and faculty (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Baldrige 1970; McGrath 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige & Riley, 1977; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998).

Governance in an institution has the potential to be highly political, and the level of participation is primarily left up to university administrators. However, research suggests that students not only have the desire to participate in governance, but they also can contribute to institutional improvement (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; McGrath, 1970; Morison, 1970; Lee, 1987; Golden & Schwartz, 1994; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Hines 2000; Rodriguez & Villarreal, 2012).

Morison (1970) illustrates how the various constituencies within an institution have interlocking roles and responsibilities. The intersection of these roles is vital to a shared governance model. Under this model, both administrators and students understand the importance of collaboration in the governance process. However, even with this model, ensuring

that institutions need to understand their role to engage students to be civic-minded individuals and assist them in making vitally informed decisions. For this study, governance was defined as: "[the process] with which scholars, students, teachers, administrators and trustees associated together in a college or in a university establish and carry out rules and regulations that minimize conflict, facilitate their collaboration, and preserve essential individual freedom" (Corson, 1960, pp. 12-13).

This case study sought to build upon limited literature that is primarily dated and highlights the importance of understanding how the Student Government Association (SGA) members are integrated into campus governance processes. SGAs are registered student organizations that are supported by the administration in higher education institutions for the sole purpose of serving as an advocate for student concerns (ASCSN, n.d.; CSUN, n.d.; ASGA, 2016; NSHE, 2016). In the following review of the literature, a thorough history of student governance will be provided. Further, an introduction of institutional governance; student's perceptions of their power; institutional culture and climate; critical incidents highlighting the importance of SGAs; and the theoretical framework and model will be discussed.

Overview

The history of students participating in governance describes a journey that includes one of self-advocacy, racial and ethnic liberation, and accountability. In the early days of universities, students were given autonomy over several areas at their respective institutions by trustees (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Baldrige 1970; McGrath, 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige & Riley, 1977; May, 2010). However, at this stage of participation, student's voice was limited to the preservation of student life and self-governance activities, inferring that students can govern themselves in a college environment (Brubacher & Rudy,

1968; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Horowitz & Friedland, 1970; Riley & Baldrige, 1977; May, 2010). This first step in autonomy provided students the opportunity to take ownership of their education.

McGrath (1970) describes a time in Europe where student input was valued and deemed a necessity with curriculum reform, financial policies, and day-to-day operations of an institution. Exercising power in these areas transferred authority of major institutional operations to students. Participating in campus governance legitimizes students concerns and provides them with a sense of freedom. Crane (1969, p.52) discusses the following parameters regarding governance and freedom:

- 1) Colleges and universities' must focus on the needs of the students (addressing learning styles and their lives outside of the classroom);
- 2) Students must be accepted and respected by faculty and treated as a colleague or partner in learning;
- 3) There must be clear lines of communication between students and faculty...both opinions must be considered and valued in solving problems of an institution;
- 4) A continuous educational program must be kept in the public view to illustrate the goals of learning in an open, controversial, conflicting, and indeed sometimes confusing yet honest set of circumstances;
- 5) If teaching and learning is perceived as restrictive and authoritarian, then institutions must be willing to adjust practices if needed.

It appeared that administrators realized the importance of including their most important stakeholder in the operations of colleges and universities (Baldrige, 1970; McGrath, 1970).

Considering the extent of this control, this case study will explore whether this practice or similar practices, are being conducted in the United States higher education institutions. In the following sections, a brief historical timeline will illustrate the progression of student involvement in campus governance and concluding with a discussion regarding students' perceptions of their role in campus governance.

History of Student Governance

In the Beginning: 1600s – 1900s

Nine Colonial colleges emerged in the mid to late 1600s in the United States and provided the first sense of structure to higher education (McAnear, 1952; NCES, 2016):

- New College (Harvard University), 1646;
- College of William & Mary, 1693;
- Collegiate School (Yale University), 1701;
- College of New Jersey (Princeton University), 1746;
- Kings' College (Columbia University), 1754;
- College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), 1755;
- College of Rhode Island (Brown University), 1764;
- Queen's College (Rutgers University), 1766; and
- Dartmouth College, 1769

While their origin was modeled from European institutions, their purpose and missions were vastly different. The nine colonial college governance structures denied students access to voice their concerns in the operations of institutions (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969). Lack of access to voice their concerns led to violent events and student rebellions such as, "presidents being tarred and feathered, buildings being burned, and real damage and personal harm inflicted upon individuals" (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969, p. 57).

The first notable student rebellion occurred at Harvard University in the late 1700s. The premise of this rebellion and others immediately following were mainly regarding dining options, such as the purge of food and ale. This was the first time that students expressed their frustrations regarding university operations to the administration.

The Great Butter and Rotten Cabbage Rebellions. Harvard University, established as a private university in 1636 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1766, students at Harvard University rebelled against the food being served in the dining halls. The Great Butter Rebellion of 1766 was Harvard's first documented rebellious act among students towards the university

that originated from serving sour butter to students (Harvard, 1963). This rebellion lasted for only two months before another violent rebellion occurred in 1807 known as The Rotten Cabbage Rebellion. This rebellion was similar to that of the Great Butter Rebellion of 1766 in that it provided students an avenue to express their dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of university operations. This rebellion was due to maggots being in the cabbage soup. Students became outraged forcing administration to close the dining hall and force students to apologize for their rebellious behavior (McCarthy, 1970).

Civil War Impact. Before the beginning of the Civil War (pre-1861), student governance unofficially sprouted on various campus in an attempt to provide an avenue for students to express concerns regarding the operations of an institution (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969). Students began to demand a certain level of responsibility and freedom in their institution such as:

changes in curriculum, particularly in the elective system which introduced freer choice of courses; second, ...changes in attitude on the part of faculty towards students, who accepted them more as young adults; and third, [changes] in the introduction of the most important factor in calming and sophisticating campus life – coeducation. Three other influences, one of governance, freedom, and sophistication: the development of athletics and fraternities; the introduction of special police forces, and hired policing proctors, preceptors, and residence staff; and, most important, the land-grant college movement, which established so-called people’s universities all across the nation (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969, p. 58).

This shift in student responsibility and accountability attempted to legitimize their voice in campus governance. Students began to be active participants in their education and sought to change institutional policies. Their contribution to the campus community began to extend beyond self-governance. Advocating for the rights of all students became a trend, beginning with the establishment of Student Government Associations.

Establishment of Student Government Associations. The most successful Student Government Association was established in 1883 at Amherst where the association was given authority to supervise discipline over faculty members. Although, university administration retained the authority to overturn any decision made by students or the Student Government Association, it was not regular practice to do so (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). This act of responsibility initiated the concept of student self-governance and student interest in faculty affairs. Student interest in policies affecting institutional operations spread to various institutions. For instance, students at Bryn Mawr were allowed to draft actual university policies; whereas, students at Vassar were only charged with ensuring the enforcement of policies (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). According to McGrath (1970), many institutions began to trust students with decisions related to extra-curricular activities and began to help build campus student life.

A Rise to Power: 1900s-1960s

The concept of student autonomy and self-governance quickly evolved as the college system in America began to form and as a result, making student governance in the early 1900s an onerous time. In 1904, President Draper of the University of Illinois proclaimed, "Student government is a broken reed...it is capricious, impulsive, and unreliable...it is a subterfuge and pretense" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 124). During this time, various institutions began to grant students authority over certain areas of the institution. The variance in power and authority among students across multiple institutions illustrated higher education's attempt to recognize student voices in institutional operations. Around 1915, institutions began to implement an "honor system" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 124; May, 2010). This system sought to hold students accountable for their actions and those of their peers. The honor system extended a level

of responsibility and challenged students' moral and ethical belief system by entrusting them with absolute authority over various aspects of student life.

After World War I, institutions began integrating students into the culture of institutions in the form of student debates (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). Debates allowed students to enhance their research skills using specific topics while arguing a certain point of view. With this implementation, it appeared as though administration understood the importance of providing students with a platform to advocate for something larger than themselves. This platform is the first notable form of advocacy that students encountered on campus (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). It was through this debate platform that students begin to obtain the skills necessary to become an advocate for all student rights.

During the 1920s colleges and universities began to define their role in preparing students to be civic-minded individuals for the larger society and started to give students a voice in institutional policymaking (McGrath, 1970). Although SGAs were around in the late 1800s, it wasn't until 1920s that the roles of those SGA officers transitioned from having class specific duties to that of serving the entire university (May, 2010). With the evolution of SGA roles, came an elevation in responsibility placed on them by an institution. With the expansion of duties and responsibilities, SGA structures began to shift and become more organized. The change in duties and responsibilities required that SGAs become more autonomous.

Brubacher and Rudy (1968) described the various activities of student government that emerged on campuses after World War I as,

“...participation in the maintenance of discipline, regulation of examinations (the honor system), and supervision of dormitory regulations...student councils were delegated almost complete authority over many activities; [however], in others, an authoritative pattern remained and they were given little responsibility” (p. 345).

From the statement above, it is evident that students' roles in campus governance had evolved. Some students embraced the power and trust that was granted to them by the administration, while others refused to accept responsibility and be held accountable (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). In both instances, students were invited and given a choice to participate in the governance of their institutions. However, another major shift occurred in the 1930s when student radicalism emerged (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970).

Horowitz (1987) suggested that a shift in defining student roles in campus governance occurred in the 1930s when rebel organizations became more politically active in university operations. Their involvement was primarily due to SGAs. It was through this platform that students expressed the concerns of the general student body to administrators. Developing SGAs to serve as the primary voice to advocate for student rights and issues was established.

The end of World War II and the passing of the GI Bill in 1944 led to a rapid growth in student enrollment among non-traditional students and a drastic shift in the governance of those institutions they attended (Baldrige & Riley, 1977). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a non-traditional student is defined as having the following attributes:

...does not enter postsecondary enrollment in the same year that he or she completed high school; attends part-time for at least part of the academic year; works full-time; is considered financially independent from a legal guardian; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent; [and/or] does not have a high school diploma but a General Educational Development (GED) test (2002, p. 2-3).

The GI Bill provided educational opportunities for a variety of students with career and military expertise. The federal government became increasingly concerned about veterans leaving the military and sought to provide financial assistance to those individuals for serving (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). These particular students brought a sense of urgency when introduced to policies and procedures that governed these institutions. With the addition of these students, came a shift

in how they interacted with campus activities. These students demanded an avenue to voice their concerns and their role in campus governance.

Around the 1960s, students on campuses Community Colleges of New York (C.C.N.Y), Michigan, and Columbia demanded that institutions include them in the governance processes (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). Students at these campuses demanded equal rights in deciding how their institutions were governed. Their demand included having input in areas such as, "the evaluation of teaching, the ranking of grades for Selective Service, and the disclosure or nondisclosure to the House Un-American Activities Committee [that housed] the names of members of radical undergraduate organizations" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 346). This movement led to a drastic change in student governance, as it was evident that a shift in student roles was on the horizon. These students wanted to be a part of the institution that includes authority, power, and legitimacy in governance processes beyond self-governance.

The Berkley Experience. The first major student protest against university governance was introduced at the University of California at Berkeley. Originating from anti-war issues that sprouted in the late 1930s, the "Berkeley rebellion of 1964" was formed (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970, p. 47). This rebellion started due to inconsistencies in policies regarding protests on campus. Previously, the campus territory that students requested to use for their protest was used by several student organizations for the same purposes. However, this particular protest initiated a response from external constituencies demanding its immediate cancelation. This intrusion by university administrators created a heightened awareness of university governance structures and how political forces external to an institution could affect policies and procedures on campus. This incident was termed as the "first coherent student challenge to the entire authority system of the university" (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970, p. 48). The Berkeley experience challenged

students to question the ideology and character of their institution. Almost immediately following the Berkeley experience, many college campuses began to see an increase in teach-in activities. The overall mission of a teach-in was, "[to] spread information through lengthy dialogue – accorded perfectly with the traditional role of the university as an educational institution but marked an important shift of educational concerns to the burning issue[s] of the day" (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970, p. 51). It was during this time that students began to realize their power in campus governance.

“On some campuses, students became more involved in campus governance through participation in committees, governing boards, and faculty groups” (Golden & Schwartz, 1994, p. 21). Tackling issues of this magnitude gave students a platform to exert their influence in institutional governance, but it was evident that the true decision making power still rested with administration. The end of this period marked a turning point in colleges and universities to become more proactive in improving and integrating students in the governance process. As Baldrige and Riley (1977) state,

...student governance was not merely a form of developmental activity but became a political activity – stimulated by motives and behaviors that are typical of other kinds of political interest groups working to achieve access, recognition, and efficacy in matters of policy formulation and governance (p. 240).

It appeared that students discovered a method that officially gave them an active role in campus governance.

A New Era: 1970s - present

The 1970s reflected an increase in student enrollment and an emphasis on encouraging students to participate in SGAs. "Many administrators in higher education began to acknowledge the importance of student involvement in campus governance, the need for presidents to have a

greater appreciation of the role of students in campus governance, and [honor] the valuable input from those students involved in governance" (Golden & Schwartz, 1994, p. 21). Another significant evolution in student governance was on the horizon.

Social movements. The civil rights and black power movement caused another shift in student governance on various campuses around the United States. During this time, students developed a heightened awareness around racial injustice. The Civil Rights Act, a federal law passed by Congress in 1964 that sought to eliminate discrimination in all schools and any institution receiving financial assistance from the federal government (Orfield, 1993). While injustices in the K-12 education system sparked passing of this law, due to the fiscal implications, higher education institutions were included in this mandate. It was after the passage of this law that predominately white institutions (PWIs) began to see an increase in Black students (Horowitz & Friedland, 1970). The Black Power movement in 1966, organized by The Black Panthers, sought to define this law and provide parameters for implementation. After the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., many black student organizations, i.e. black student unions/government associations, were created. However, black students at PWIs were struggling to assimilate into a culture that was vastly different from their own. Horowitz and Friedland (1970) suggest this difficulty was due to "black students' capacities for organization were severely limited...Perhaps even more significantly, the necessary ideological orientation was only then being formulated: these students were still *Negroes* rather than *Blacks*" (p. 188). Changing the perception of this population to understand the value of their opinions in campus governance meant changing their perception and identity.

Bologna uprising.

Things blew up in Bologna in early 1977, when Lama, the leader of the Stalinist CGIL Union went to the University to lecture members of the Circolo and Autonomi (who

used it as a base) and students, arguing they should join the Communist Party. He was chased from the building, and only saved from serious harm by his security team and the cops he had brought with him. The University head called in cops to restore order, sparking off a fierce battle leading to the occupation of all the university facilities, which became the focus for workers and students meeting (Harvard, 1883, p. 1).

In addition to an increase in enrollment, the drastic changes in institutional culture and curriculum added to the growth of SGAs, formerly referred to as Student Assemblies and Class Councils (May, 2010). Regardless of the governance structures in place, the political landscape on and off campus encouraged students to voice their concerns and seek out avenues where their voice could influence policy changes within an institution.

Models of student participation. McGrath (1970) felt that institutions could be more proactive with integrating students in the formal practice of campus governance instead of being reactive and including them after a major campus issue occurred. Golden and Schwartz (1994) drafted several models to show what various levels of student participation would look. The most prevalent model is an independent student government, consisting only of students. A sovereign student government would solely be concerned with advocating for student issues and would serve as a representative voice of the student body to administrators. A second model is community governance, where students work in conjunction with faculty and staff to share governance power. This model requires full participation and emersion into the governance of an institution. Under this model, students will have full voting power on institutional policies. The third model is a combination of the first two, in which students participate in the governance of the institution with a separate government of their own as well as with a voice in an institution's community governing body or Board of Regents. This model closely resembles that of an institution with a SGA with responsibility in the governance of an institution. Using those above

as a road map may help institutions become more involved with their SGAs and clearly define a role for them in campus governance.

Critical Incidents Involving SGAs

Several examples in history have helped shape and define roles of SGAs in institutional governance. The events below describe cases where SGAs were influential in settling issues regarding campus policies and/or governance. The events below also illustrate an institutions commitment to ensuring that students participate in campus governance.

Examples of student advocacy. An incident at the University of Massachusetts (UM) Amherst that challenged institutional policies and helped define roles of SGAs within that institution. Shearer, Ward, and Wattley (1999) discuss a case in which an entity within an institution was developed to provide students and student organizations with legal consultation. However, due to budgetary concerns, the university decided to eliminate the unit. Several members of the student body appealed to the SGA at UM to keep the department open as it provided students with valuable legal advice. Students claimed the university eliminated the legal service office because of the multitude of lawsuits that it won against the university. The claims were dismissed and the court's decision was to uphold the decision made by the Board of Trustees to eliminate the program. The students did not win the case, this example illustrates the power of SGAs to advocate on the behalf of students and truly represent the voice of students in institutional decision-making.

Another example of student advocacy occurred at the University of Alabama (UA). As told by McClamrock, Meyer, and Spencer (1989), the SGA at (UA) represented the student body's right to form a politically charged student organization. Students at UA argued against the right to free speech. The bylaws of the SGA at UA deemed it inappropriate to distribute

campaign literature to students on election day. However, to students, it was a violation of their first amendment right. As a result, the student organization filed a lawsuit against UA and its SGA. However, the court denied the claim because, as a state entity, the SGA was protected under the same restrictions at the university regarding campaigning. In this instance, the SGA agreed with institutional policy and upheld it regardless of any potential backlash from the student population. This particular case is an example of how SGAs can be an objective voice in institutional governance and put the best interest of the university before the demands and personal interests of their peers.

As societal issues become more complex, exercising and identifying a role for student's voice is becoming more critical. Student governance in the early 2000s continued to be one that is social justice oriented and driven. Students during this time were becoming outraged by inequality, whether it stemmed from the lack of educational resources for students, centered on the prison to pipeline debacle, or other areas exposed by the media.

Currently, there has been an influx of organizing using social media platforms on college campuses. With the growth of technology, students are no longer forced to pass out flyers, chalk sidewalks, or write letters to express their uneasiness on college campuses. However, the current state of students participating in governance is still unstable. Baldrige and Riley (1977) state that students are associated with campus governance in three contexts: "as employees, as affected third parties, and as consumers" (p. 248).

Concluding Remarks on the History of Student Governance

Research on student governance identified factors that could have caused the decline of student participation as: a lack of respect among administrators and faculty members towards students participating in this process: student apathy; student transiency; student immaturity:

frequent absence of students from university commitment members; limited knowledge and experience of students; the requirement of confidentiality; and the exclusion of students from sensitive decision issues (Knock, 1969; McGrath, 1970; Lee, 1987). Even with platforms in place to voice their concerns, such as SGAs, many students stated that they are just passing through and illustrate a lack of apathy to participate in governance activities (Planas et al., 2011). If students desire to become active participants in an institution, institutions must provide avenues for them to do so. Institutions must empower students to want to participate in campus governance, and students must be aware of how their voice in this process could improve an institution.

Literature Review on Student and Institutional Governance

The sections below will provide a thorough review of pertinent scholarly research and theoretical perspectives on undergraduate student governance and its evolution. A discussion regarding the inclusion and exclusion of students will be discussed followed by literature regarding students' perception of power. Further an exploration of institutional culture and climate, review of organizational theory and postmodernism, and critical incidents involving SGAs will be discussed.

Inclusion vs. Exclusion

Shared governance is a concept that denotes a sense of community among members in an institution. This concept encourages all entities to envision an environment where all voices are heard, respected, and discussed with an overall goal of making the organization better. As an institution's most important stakeholder, students should be afforded that right to voice their opinions about the day-to-day operations of an institution. McGrath (1970) discussed several reasons for including students in the governance process:

- (1) Institutional professions and actions state that if students are to value education, then they should be given the right to participate in institutional governance;
- (2) The sophistication of students speaks to their vested interest in the “social, economic, racial, political, and international problems of their age” (p. 52);
- (3) Students should be educated for independent living, which is preparing them to be productive citizens in society;
- (4) Students could help improve higher education processes;
- (5) The abolition of the doctrine of In Loco Parentis (in lieu of parents) in efforts to help students gain ownership and take responsibility of their lives and actions; and
- (6) The improvement of instruction and pedagogy to assist with evaluating teaching activities.

The aforementioned illustrates the importance of student governance and how integrating students in this process could help an institution prosper. Allowing students to participate in this process is a fundamental right as a consumer of their services and students may be the driving force behind institutional change and overall education reform. Students are taking classes, interacting with staff, and utilizing resources within an institution. Therefore, having students share their experiences with courses or interacting with campus support services could improve the institution. Several institutions empowered students to be active participants in campus governance. Roosevelt University, founded in 1945 in Illinois, is an institution that included students in campus governance since its inception. Likewise, Bennington College, founded in 1932 in Vermont, allowed students to participate in policymaking and various other areas on campus (McGrath, 1970).

On the contrary, it is understood why many administrators believe that students should not have shared responsibility in institutional governance (McGrath, 1970; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999) McGrath (1970) illustrates reasons why students should not participate in governance:

- (1) Fear of students attempting to control academia;
- (2) The immaturity of students alludes to the fact that they are unable to fully participate in high level governance activities;
- (3) The transient nature of the student body highlighting that students are only active members of an institution for a specified amount of time;

- (4) "...the ignorance of professional values" (p. 64) indicating that students lack professional abilities, knowledge, and skills needed to provide input in various issues within an institution;
- (5) "...the interference with study and gainful employment" (p. 65) speaks to the student's ability to devote the time needed to carry out responsibilities that are linked to institutional governance.

Some of the reasons above speak to power, authority, legitimacy, lack of knowledge surrounding potential decisions, and time management. With the exception of the "fear of students attempting to control academia" those additional reasons, characteristics, and attributes could be developed through proper guidance, mentoring, and professional training.

Lizzo and Wilson (2009) discuss the importance of helping students understand their roles in institutional governance and state that more training and professional development is needed to participate in governance. Without proper training, students may lack the skills required to navigate governance structures within institutions. Informal or formal training can take place to ensure students can be useful in participating in campus governance. Informal training can take the form of allowing students who express an interest in governance to shadow faculty or administrators in situations regarding campus governance. Formalized training can be in the way of leadership development or communication workshops. Institutions have evolved since the early years of student involvement, and it is necessary to help equip them to gain their rightful place in shared governance. In the section below, students' perceptions of their roles in campus governance will be discussed.

Students' Perception of their Power

Higher-level decision-making that is needed to participate in campus governance involves a particular set of skills and knowledge. Ensuring students are acquiring or refining those skills requires action from the institution and administration. As Lee (1987) states, encouraging students to participate in governance helps to exercise their civic duty and enhance

their ethical beliefs. Having students understand the significance of their involvement and become knowledgeable about university processes is essential to their assimilation into university culture (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

Students' perceptions of their power in the governance process is not surprising. According to Menon (2005), students believe that they have very little input in high or low-level decision-making regarding institutional aims and priorities and are dissatisfied with the present state of affairs regarding their participation. Over the years, students have demanded to be included in the governance process, often using the methods from various movements (i.e., Civil Rights, Labor, and Feminist) (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969). Additionally, students suggest that institutions should abandon traditional top down leadership models to address the limitations in the effectiveness of student representatives in the decision-making process (Menon, 2005).

In a conversation with student government leaders, Miles, Miller, and Nadler (2008), highlighted several areas of importance in advocating for student rights: communication with the student body and administration; having necessary resources to advocate on behalf of the student body; having clearly defined roles for SGA officers; and a demand for leadership that is equitable and broad-based on campus. Also, some administrators may wonder if students are "special interest pleaders" (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998, p. 173) only interested in moving the agenda of students forward. Many administrators may wonder if students can be unbiased and bring about change that benefits the institution (Komives et al., 1998).

Benezet (1981) state that, "decision making in institutions of higher education will be better integrated into its purpose as it becomes a multisided process with broad participation under careful monitoring for effective action" (p. 715). Implementing a shared governance model benefits all vested parties and constituencies. In the section below, institutional culture and

climate will be discussed to provide insight into how the culture of an institution may encourage or hinder student participation in governance.

Institutional Culture and Climate

To gain a thorough understanding of how students are integrated into campus governance, one must explore various governance structures, including culture and climates. Governance structures provide a blueprint of an institution's commitment to engage students in campus governance. As such, different institutional types represent the governance and mission of an institution. According to the Indiana University (2015), there are seven basic types of colleges and universities in the United States: Doctoral Universities; Master's Colleges and Universities; Baccalaureate Colleges; Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges; Associate's Colleges; Special Focus Institutions (e.g. Technical Professionals, Engineering Schools, S.T.E.A.M. Schools, Law Schools, etc.) and Tribal Colleges. Within each classification are sub-categories that describe size, specialization, and rigor of research. Each type of institution typically aligns with its organization's behavior and governance structure.

To fully understand the relationship between a smaller organization (SGAs) within a larger organization (an institution), a thorough history of each must be considered. An institution's culture and climate have an impact on its functionality and are often a representation of its governance structure (Bess & Dee, 2008; Hendrickson et al., 2013). Culture and climate are defined differently in higher education institutions. Culture pertains to the value and belief system that is formed from various groups within an institution while climate refers to the perceptions and attitudes towards an institution (Hendrickson et al., 2013). It is essential to know the culture and environment of an institution to gain a better understanding of how to integrate

students into campus governance. If faculty and administrators have not created a culture or climate that welcomes student voices, then efforts for integration will not be successful.

Studying shared governance models means studying institutional culture and its surrounding internal and external constituencies and communities. Specific governance structures may isolate "young and less-experienced learners from experienced and knowledgeable scholars" (Benezet, 1981, p. 175). Benezet is suggesting that hierarchical structures in an institution have the potential to prevent students from having access to additional sources of knowledge and therefore could be hindering participation in campus governance. This concept reinforces the ideology that power and authority are the roots of gaining access to participate in campus governance. Therefore, understanding the environment in which a SGA resides helps to understand the constraints placed upon SGAs and their members. It is also important to recognize the competing forces of authority, both internal and external, may influence institutional culture and climate.

Governance models: Internal and external interests.

Hines (2000) describes internal interests as adhering to the needs of faculty, staff, and students. While external interests are important for institutions, internal interests are vital to the day-to-day operations of the institution and the overall institutional governance structure. As Baldrige (1970; see also, Baldrige & Riley, 1977; Bess & Dee, 2008) states, governance structures of universities typically follow a culture related to a bureaucracy, collegial, or political structure. A component of this case study seeks to examine how characteristics of each structure indirectly, and in some instances directly, impact the level of participation in governance among students. Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972; see also, Baldrige & Riley, 1977) also introduced another model, organized anarchy that will also be discussed to provide additional insight.

Bureaucratic model. Bureaucratic models focus solely on structure and authority and seek to operate as a business with a hierarchical model. This governance model is assumed the most structured model due to its organized nature. Its structure focuses on formal power, as such; this model has the potential to exclude student voices and others that are not in a role of authority. Baldrige and Riley (1977) identify five features of this model:

1) Higher education organizations have a formal hierarchy with bylaws and organizational charts which specify organizational levels and role relationships between members; 2) There are formal lines of communication to be observed; 3) Authority relationships, while sometimes unclear, nevertheless are present; 4) Specific policies and rules govern much of the work of the institution. There are deadlines to be met, records to be kept, periodic reports to be made; 5) and decision making often occurs in a relatively routine, formalized manner using decision councils and procedures established by institutional bylaws (p. 255).

While this model may be ideal for specific aspects of university operations (e.g., fiscal operations and course scheduling and evaluation), such as those that operate as a routine, this model has minimum opportunity for student input. Power and authority within this governance model undermine individual student voice in governance processes.

Hendrickson, et al. (2013) identifies several weaknesses with this model: 1) its focus on how policies are implemented and enforced versus how policies are formed; 2) its exclusion of the variety of contingencies that an institution serves. This model requires that roles be clearly defined in an institution. If members in an institution are unclear of their roles within this model, institutional effectiveness and efficiency will be compromised (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Collegial model. The collegial model illustrates more of a shared governance model and invites members of the campus community to participate in the decision-making processes. It is the collegial model of institutional governance that an academic community values and that is deemed as “a utopian prescription for operating the educational system” (Baldrige & Riley, 1977, p. 12). However, Baldrige and Riley (1977) also discuss a major weakness that this

model has in a university setting as one that lacks the infrastructure to deal with conflict. A collegial model is rooted in collegiality and finding consensus among its members (Bess & Dee, 2008; Hendrickson et. al, 2013).

However, according to Riley and Baldrige (1977) several weaknesses exist within this model: 1) This model ignores the journey to consensus that could “neglect the prolonged battles that precede consensus, as well as decisions that actually represent the victory of one group over another” (p. 13) and 2) Decision making is directly affected in this model. A lack of consensus in problem solving will impact decision making.

Political model. On contrary, a political model highlights the influence that external constituencies have on policy formation and implementation at an institution. Those institutions operating under a political model equates university environments to those of political entities. According to Riley and Baldrige (1977) the political model, “focus on policy-forming processes, because major policies commit an organization to definite goals and set the strategies for reaching those goals” (p. 12). This model is focused on developing policies that move an organization’s mission and vision forward.

Weaknesses associated with this model stems from lacking flexibility and having an espoused belief regarding university operations. This lack of flexibility can stifle innovation within the organization and can cause coercion. Other weaknesses with this model include the possibility that members can manipulate policies and refuse to implement new programs or experiment with various activities due to the strong focus on policy formation.

Organized anarchy. Another governance model that could emerge within institutions is an “organized anarchy” which is a system that lacks centralization (Baldrige et. al, 1977, p. 131; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). This governance model dwells in individuality and lacks

cohesiveness and can be referred to as a *Garbage Can* model (Cohen, et. al., 1972, p. 88). While most organizations may adhere to a bureaucratic, collegial, or political model, organized anarchies exhibit characteristics that hinders growth. Cohen, et. al (1972) describes three characteristics: “problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation (p. 88).

Problematic preferences describe an environment where inconsistency is rampant in decision making and goal setting. An organization exhibiting this characteristic lacks a uniformed set of ideas and structure. Unclear technology speaks to an organization process and the extent of its clarity among organizational members. Fluid participation speaks to the commitment and lack of involvement of organizational members in advancing organizational goals (Cohen, et al., 1972).

Weaknesses under this model could imply that leaders are not considered a resource and decision making is more reactive than proactive. Organized anarchy within an organization will most likely lead to chaos and disorganization. This lack of order could potentially disrupt members of the organization and could cause a decrease in productivity and innovation.

In the following section, three paradigms of organizational theory are discussed. Further, the lens through which this study is examined, post-modernism, is explored.

Organizational Theory

Organizational theory is useful in exploring how organizations are structured and assist in analyzing challenges that may occur within a particular context. Concepts within organizational theory can be applied to various types of organizations (Bess & Dee, 2008). Although I am studying educational organizations, structural and operational mechanisms are somewhat similar to other business structures. Regardless of an institution's governance structure, SGAs have a unique mission in representing students and advocating for their rights. Within organizational

theory, three paradigms can be used to analyze organizational behavior and functionality. Each paradigm will be explained below.

Three paradigms of organizational theory. One can choose to analyze problems or challenges that occur in organizations from a positivist perspective, social constructivist perspective, or a postmodernism perspective (Bess & Dee, 2008). Those with a positivist perspective believe that one can explain, predict, and control organizational behavior through observations and the use of analytical tools. Regarding student participation in governance, a positivist would use data to gauge the extent to which students were influencing campus governance. They would attempt to uncover the trends of students participating in a SGAs and conduct various analysis to understand why participation in campus governance has increased or decreased. The results of this analysis would then be discussed, and efforts made to rectify the challenges that altered participation.

Analyzing an institution from a social constructivist perspective encourages one to understand that organizational behavior and phenomenon exist within organizations based on an interpretation from organizational members. A social constructivist would seek to understand the phenomenon that exists among an institution, SGA, and SGA members. Concerning student input in campus governance, a social constructivist would want to know how students, staff, and faculty interpret the value of student input. They would interview those involved to get a better understanding of the phenomenon occurring and devise a plan of action (Bess & Dee, 2008). While this topic can be explored through from a positivist lens as well as a social constructivist, this study will primarily use a postmodernism lens to discuss student governance. This lens was chosen because it resonates with the literature on student governance that highlights a journey of authority and power. This connection will be further explained in the section below.

Postmodernism and student governance. Characteristics of a postmodernism perspective include individuals that believe “theories used to explain organizational phenomena have historically tended to come from the point of view of managers, who frequently are not sensitive to the needs of organizational members who are not in positions of authority or power” (Bess & Dee, 2008). In most higher education institutions, governance structures are rooted in hierarchical and bureaucratic processes and are grounded in principles that convey the importance of power and authority. Policies and procedures around admissions, housing, financial aid, and curriculum has historically reinforced this concept of power and authority.

Choosing to analyze this topic from a postmodernism perspective allows me to be cognizant of the population of students at the institutions included in this study. Institutions in this study in Southern Nevada have a large number of underrepresented and first-generation college students. First generation students are coming to an institution with neither parent having a college degree. These students are entering institutions with very little support based on their attributes and characteristics. Therefore, organizational behavior and culture are important to note when examining whether students in SGAs are involved in campus governance. There are recommendations for organizational leaders from this perspective that seek to be inclusive of all vested parties, particularly those that are traditionally silenced (i.e., underrepresented groups). Using this perspective, this study explored why student voices are essential in campus governance to challenge old policies and procedures that once governed these institutions. A postmodernist perspective recognizes that demographic changes of prospective and current students in higher education should cause a reexamination of organizational behavior and phenomena that occur within those governance structures.

Concluding Remarks on Institutional Culture and Climate

In examining the influence that SGAs have on the governance processes at an institution, the overall governance structure of the university is a significant factor in whether or not participation is encouraged, particularly among students. These data could potentially show that institutions dwell in an environment similar to the collegial model of governance, as it is the model that encourages input and participation in institutional governance.

Summary

The most salient themes that emerged from the literature are: power and authority; a desire to participate in campus governance; training and development; complex governance processes; and inability to engage in high or low level of governance. These themes provide a foundation of how the literature regarding student governance has evolved over the years and will aid in analyzing the data. In the next section, I discuss why this topic was analyzed through Role Theory and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development to explore students' participation in institutional governance.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework and model that guided this study is Role Theory (RT) (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Bess & Dee, 2008) and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development Model (1969; *see also* Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Each will be explained in the sections below.

Role Theory (RT)

Role Theory is largely a social psychology theory commonly used to assess management practices and to understand the behaviors associated with them (Biddle, 1968; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977; Bess & Dee, 2008). Biddle (1968) discusses five perspectives of Role Theory: Functional Role Theory, Symbolic Interactionist Role Theory,

Structural Role Theory, Organizational Role Theory, and Cognitive Role Theory. Each perspective will be described in detail below.

Biddle describes the five perspectives as exhibiting the following characteristics:

- *Functional Role Theory* refers to positions of organizational members within a secure social system;
- *Symbolic Interactionist Role Theory* highlights individual roles within a system and their evolution through various aspects of interaction;
- *Structural Role Theory* focuses on examining social structures of an organization;
- *Organizational Role Theory* represents the predominant approach when examining organizational behavior and relationships;
- *Cognitive Role Theory* examines the relationship between role expectations and individual behavior.

While all perspectives of Role Theory are appropriate to utilize for this study, its primary focus was centered on Organizational Role Theory to explore organizational behaviors and relationships.

This study utilized Role Theory to explore the duties and responsibilities of undergraduate SGA students in campus governance to understanding how institutional models help to facilitate or create experiences to this process. Role Theory uses a set of concepts that attempts to capture the organization's members' effects as a result of the organizations functionality while “[examining] the dimensions of roles by exploring their effects on organizational members and on the organization as a whole” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 246). The concept of Role Theory implies that boundaries are in place, a particular set of duties or expectations from a person or group, as well as a commitment from members to their respective organization (Schuler, et. al., 1977).

Components of Role Theory

Role Theory is comprised of several concepts and components, depending on the theorist being explored. Biddle (1986) describes four key concepts: consensus (e.g., seeking agreement),

conformity (e.g., compliance), role conflict (e.g., lack of consensus), and role taking (e.g., presuming the role of others). Bess and Dee (2008) highlights six concepts: role conflict which is similar to Biddle's definition in that roles lack consensus; role ambiguity referring to unclear role expectations; manifest-latent highlighting unintentional roles that emerge; diffuseness-specificity referring to the specificity of the roles as communicated by those in authority; universalism-particularism speaks to influence of personal and interpersonal factors on communication efforts between those in power and other organizational members; quality-performance orientation that highlights status versus achievement of roles in an organization.

For the purposes of this study, only role ambiguity and conflict were utilized because those particular concepts addressed the research questions put forth by this study. Bess and Dee (2008) mentions several characteristics within role ambiguity (perceptual ambiguity and objective ambiguity) and role conflict (person-role conflict, inter-sender conflict, intra-sender conflict, and inter-role conflict) that will be discussed in this section.

Role ambiguity. Role ambiguity is defined as, “the degree to which clear information is lacking regarding (a) the expectations associated with a role, (b) methods for fulfilling known role expectations, and/or (c) the consequences of role performance” (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Levinson, 1965; Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). The basic concept of role ambiguity is that it “increase[s] the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality, and will thus perform less effectively” (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970, p. 151). *Perceptual ambiguity* is individualized and speaks to the ambiguity that resides within an individual's' perception of their duties and responsibilities. *Objective ambiguity* refers to how the duties and responsibilities are disseminated to a person (Bess & Dee, 2008).

As mentioned above, students early on in higher education had absolute power over curriculum, day-to-day operations, and financing of an institution (McGrath, 1970). Those students were aware of their rights and responsibilities because they helped to establish them. However, as institutions evolved into more complex entities, so did their mission, vision, and policies that govern them.

Key questions that emerged from examining role ambiguity are: How are institutions defining the roles of students in campus governance? How are student members of SGA perceiving their role (what Bess & Dee (2008) term as perceptual role ambiguity)? Is there a lack in communication of how roles of students are defined by an institution (defined as objective role ambiguity)?

As institutions evolved into more of a corporate governance structure, decision-making has been generally left to administrators or faculty. While seeking to appease a growing number of internal and external constituencies, the decision-making process and goals within these institutions began to become more ambiguous and encompass an increasing amount of conflict (Baldrige et. al., 1977).

Role conflict. Role conflict “is defined as incongruity of the expectations associated with a role” (Sell et. al., 1981, p. 44; *see also*, Biddle, 1968; Bess & Dee, 2008). The lack of structure in identifying roles can cause distress among organizations and their members. Bess and Dee (2008) highlight four characteristics of role conflict: person-role conflict; intersender conflict; intrasender conflict; and inter-role conflict. Person-role conflict refers to the extent to which role expectations differ from a person's perception of their role. For example, an institution informing members of a SGA that their governing power is limited to affairs relating to extracurricular activities. Members may have already interpreted, or perceive their duties and

responsibilities as extending beyond those relating to extracurricular activities. The intersender conflict highlights the conflict between those in authority as it relates to behavior required by individuals. For instance, advisors of SGAs have competing authorities in that upper administration may expect them to uphold an institution position on a particular matter, but members of the SGA expect advisors to support their opposing position. Intrasender conflict explores the extent to which an organizational member has a variance in role expectations from one person. An example of this is administrators' in an institution telling members of an SGA that their opinions and viewpoints matter but is repeatedly failing to respond to student concerns. The last characteristic in role conflict is inter-role conflict, which is a resource management problem. This particular characteristic highlights the extent to which an individual can reasonably manage the time and resources needed to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a specific role. An advisor of a SGA can experience inter-role conflict by attempting to attend all SGA events and activities in addition to fulfilling their primary duties as an employee of an institution.

Rizzo et al. (1970) discuss the concept of adhering to multiple sources of authority as being a significant cause of role conflict. Role expectations may be altered from role senders to the focal person. In this instance, administration and SGAs can alternate being a role sender and focal person. SGA's are often the liaison between the student body and administration, which could incite undue stress on SGAs. Identifying roles and setting expectations for duties provides a blueprint for employees as to the behavior that is expected. In addition to standardizing expected behavior, having roles within an organization seals a contractual relationship between the employee and the organization (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Conflict resulting in pressures from an institution to conform to opinions that are not in the interest of the student body or those in conflict with their interest has the potential to cause severe problems for SGAs. Rizzo et al. (1970) ask the question of whether or not role conflict interferes with organizational effectiveness. In this study, whether SGAs can be influential in the decision-making processes if role ambiguity and conflict are present will be addressed.

The question above leads to an exploration of how students perceive their roles in institutional governance and their expected behaviors in this area largely depends on how the roles are communicated to them (Sell et al., 1981). Depending on how that is handled, role ambiguity and conflict may emerge. How can students represent their peers while upholding policies of an institution may contradict the needs of students? At times, the two may conflict and cause disagreements.

Another aspect of role conflict originates from a lack of consensus (Biddle, 1968). Competing priorities around organizational goals could incite conflict within groups of people. Consensus implies that an agreement regarding organizational or role expectations has been reached among various constituencies within an organization. It also means that there is a certain level of support that is shown to an individual.

Actors in role theory. Bess and Dee (2008) identify the various actors in Role Theory. *Role senders* are essentially administrators and key people in the institution that help to “create and interpret” (p. 249) the duties and responsibilities of members in the organization. Creating and interpreting duties and responsibilities of students in this process should be done in such a way that indicates the value of student voice. Ensuring students have a role in governance that is legitimate and valued among administrators informs students that their voices matter.

Another important actor in role theory involves *sent expectations*. This concept is an institutions code of conduct where clearly defined roles and expectation for behavior are explained to each member. A *sent expectation* is the guidelines by which a member of an institution is governed. *Received role* relates to how an individual interprets their role. This actor in role theory describes one's perception of the duties and responsibilities assigned. SGAs may have a different interpretation of their role in campus governance than administrators. Perception of legitimacy in one's role can influence behavior in an institution. Finally, *response of the focal person* addresses both the "psychological and behavioral" (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 249) response by those that identify with specific roles. This response can either encourage or hinder a student from participating in governance. The actors above have a linear relationship with each other in that one influences and effects the other. Those actors also have the potential to impact the culture and climate of an institution if they are not in place. SGAs and an institution will have each of the actors listed above. How well they interact with each other will be explored in this study and may or may not hinder the progression of an institution in integrating students in the governance process.

When using Role Theory as a lens to explore organizational and individual behavior, one must be mindful of any additional variables that are included such as institutional factors, unique characteristics of members, and relationships that are formed within the organization that may affect how roles are defined, interpreted and perceived (Bess & Dee, 2008). Using Role Theory to understand the roles of undergraduate SGA members in campus governance will allow for the exploration how their roles were defined (by either the institution or the SGA) and investigate whether a particular governance model helps to facilitate or impede this process. Discussing the influence an institution has on the integration of SGA members in campus governance requires

the exploration of relationships between an organization and its members. Role Theory will help to decipher whether management practices or policies of an institution has an impact on how active undergraduate SGA members are in the decision-making processes of the institution. As stated by Fisher (2010), "...role theory offers considerable explanatory power in that it allows to take both the benefits and the cost of applying the controllability principle into consideration" (p. 78).

Utilizing Role Theory may help undergraduate students who participate in SGAs to have a clearer vision of their responsibilities and mechanisms that an institution has in place to facilitate their participation in campus governance. For this reason, this theory is applicable for addressing the research questions in this study.

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development

In addition to Role Theory, Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development model will be utilized to explore the identity development of undergraduate students. The literature suggests that administrators believe students lack intellectual capacity to participate in a higher level decision-making process regarding institutional policies (McGrath, 1970; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). To address this perspective, this study will use Chickering's model to gain a better understanding of how students are acquiring skills and knowledge needed to participate in campus governance.

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development is a series of developmental stages that college students are experiencing. Chickering (1981) acknowledges that his model is not a linear set of stages students go through or can master particular areas one step at a time. While this model was not originally developed for this particular population, it has since then been adapted to be inclusive of college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1969).

The seven vectors. Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development are: *developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity* (Chickering & Reisser, 1969; Chickering & Associates, 1981; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Each vector has its own attributes and characteristics to explain its usefulness: *developing competence* speaks to the intellectual, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence; *managing emotions* refers to a student's ability to control their emotions so that they are not a hindrance; *moving through autonomy toward interdependence* speaks to a student's self-governance; *establishing identity* refers to students attaining a sense of self; *freeing interpersonal relationships* refers to a student's value of individuality and differences among others; *developing purpose* is helping students' to clarify their life goals; and *developing integrity* helps students establish morals and values (Chickering & Reisser, 1969; Chickering & Associates, 1981; Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Although all are valid characteristics in the development of a college-aged student, this study only focused on four of the seven vectors (*developing competence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing purpose, and developing integrity*). While other vectors address important aspects of identity development in college students, the four that were chosen for this topic directly tackle the components that students are lacking from the literature. The particular vectors that were used help us understand the ideology that suggest students lack the necessary psychosocial and development skills needed to participate in higher-level decision making. Each vector will be discussed in the following sections.

Developing competence. Under the umbrella of developing competence, is the concept of intellectual competence and interpersonal competence. According Chickering and Reisser,

intellectual competence involves using the mind's skills to comprehend, reflect, analyze, synthesize, and interpret. It entails mastering content, acquiring aesthetic appreciation and cultural interests, and, perhaps most important, developing the ability to reason, solve problems, weigh evidence, think originally, and engage in active learning (1969, p. 53-54).

This statement supports the claim that undergraduate students possess the intellectual ability to participate in an intricate process such as decision-making. Developing intellectual competencies enhances critical thinking skills, moral and rational reasoning abilities, and how one processes information and knowledge (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). All of which are characteristics and attributes that college students need to participate in a complex process such as governance.

In addition to intellectual competencies, interpersonal competencies are developed that assist with basic comprehension, listening, and communication skills (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Associates, 1981; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This particular skill set helps to develop a student's ability to work in groups and to process unknown and prior knowledge in efforts to make informed decisions. Chickering and Reisser (1993) provide a common list of interpersonal competencies as the following: "mentoring, managing, leading, negotiating, instructing, supervising, consulting, persuading, communicating, and entertaining (p. 78). Students with this level of intellectual development also have the ability to be *reflective learners* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Boyd and Fales (1983) defines reflective as "the process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience (present or past) in terms of self (self in relation to self and self in relation to the world)" (p. 101). Therefore, being a reflective learner means taking a lived experience and internalizing as an individual to gain personal perspective on a particular process. This list not only illustrate the skills needed for students to participate in

governance but also a set of skills that administrators and faculty should possess to provide a welcoming environment for SGAs wanting to participate.

Additional characteristics of intellectual competence include: “The ability to identify problems and define them in clear, workable terms; the ability to synthesize and integrate information from diverse sources for a particular purpose; the ability to invent answers or hypotheses rather than simply to search for and find them; the ability to operate creatively within existing conditions and to establish and maintain conditions that enable continued creativity” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 63).

Moving through autonomy toward interdependence. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), this stage of identity development has three components:

emotional independence [which includes] freedom from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others; instrumental independence [which is] the ability to carry on activities and solve problems in a self-directed manner, and the freedom and confidence to be mobile in order to pursue opportunity or adventure; interdependence [defined as] an awareness of one’s place in and commitment to the welfare of the larger community (p. 117).

This stage suggests that students are developing skills that fosters individual thinking and autonomous living situations. As students transition through this stage, they are learning to rely on themselves and others for support outside of their family home. Students are learning to search for information and are becoming functional adults. Gaining autonomy in college requires that students exhibit constraint in their environment.

Developing purpose. This stage of Chickering’s identity development model, “...entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 209). Developing purpose requires establishing a set of characteristics that fosters ownership in one’s life. College students in this stage are beginning to understand their role in the world and how to plan their

life. Moving through this stage of identity development is extremely important for college aged students as it sets the foundation of self-advocacy as well as developing skills to advocate for something larger than themselves.

Developing integrity. It is through this stage of identity development that students began to understand their life's values and beliefs. This stage helps students develop a life mission and critically evaluate their values in relation to their surrounding environment (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Developing integrity helps students understand their moral compass and ethical beliefs regarding particular situations. This stage is particularly important for students to develop to participate in institutional governance because it helps to ensure that students are entering the discussion with a foundation of ethical principles. The competencies above should be evident to administrators and faculty who facilitate integrating students in governance processes. However, administrators should be aware that the aforementioned competencies increase students' willingness to participate in campus governance activities.

The theoretical framework and conceptual model described above were specifically chosen to help guide this research study. While there are a multitude of other theories and models that could have been used, Role Theory and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development model helps to examine the organizational and individual behavior, the identity development of college-aged students, and the interaction between institutional processes within an institution that may affect students' behavior. In addition, it addresses key questions identified in the research.

Summary

The history of student governance is one that addresses the plight of students to gain social awareness in colleges and universities. Having an avenue where students are comfortable

and encouraged to advocate for social justice, financial, and educational issue helps students become accountable for their education and take ownership of their lives. SGAs were originally designed to be that platform for students. Perley (1998) states there are basic opportunities that should be afforded to students:

[students should] be listened to in the classroom without fear of institutional reprisal for the substance of their views, [have] freedom to discuss questions of institutional policy and operation, [have] the right to academic due process when charged with serious violations of institutional regulations, and [have] the same right to hear speakers of their own choice as is enjoyed by other components of the institution (p. 90)

Undergraduate student governance and SGAs have a long history of influencing institutional culture and creating institutional change. Instituting a shared governance model within an institution that includes students reinforces an institutions mission of holistically educating students. Providing a platform in the form of a SGA tells students that an institution is interested in their concerns and is making a conscious effort to provide a structured environment to convey them to administration.

However, despite the mechanisms in place, business operations and government influence in higher education institutions allow for minimum student input. The complexity of the governance processes leaves many administrators to wonder if students have the critical thinking skills to participate in such an intricate and vital process (McGrath, 1970; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). Therefore, being able to assess the effectiveness of current platforms that higher education institutions provide is an important component in helping students become active participants in campus governance. Without such assessments, platforms that institutions provide may give students a false sense of participating in campus governance or having the opportunity to influence institutional policies.

Chapter 3 provides an in-depth analysis of the methodology that was chosen to carry out this study. The chapter provides insight into my philosophical assumptions about student governance; provides a detailed description of the research design and research questions; and justifies the chosen interview sites and participants. The chapter will concludes with a plan for collecting and analyzing the data as well as addresses how validity, reliability, and ethical issues were handled while conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a thorough overview of the literature as it relates to student governance, highlighting individual, collective, and institutional bureaucracy that exist, as well as providing an overview of the theoretical framework and conceptual model that will be used. Though this study sought to build upon previous literature and research regarding the effectiveness and impact of SGAs is limited, the foundation of student governance has been around since the first college in Colonial America (May, 2010). Institutions are becoming more complex and intricate as they seek to educate diverse populations. In this chapter, I will address a number of areas about: my philosophical assumptions about student governance; research design; purpose; research questions; interview sites; participant selection; data collection and analysis plan; credibility and reliability; ethical issues; and conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Philosophical Assumption

This study sought to accomplish many goals: bringing about practical change in the way institutions integrate students into campus governance; help administrators understand the power that undergraduate students in SGAs possess in advocating on behalf of their peers; and help enhance communication between administrators and student members in SGAs regarding university operations.

While views expressed may cross into a social constructivist point of view throughout this study, it was not my intent to further marginalize any group of students from being active participants in their institution, nor did it seek to expose an institution as an organization that is not concerned with student's voice. By taking this approach, it is essential to work with all vested

parties to ensure that results from this research provided recommendations for improvement with policy and practice. The section below will thoroughly describe the research design and methodological approach that was selected to carry out this study.

Research Design

This study used an exploratory, multi-site embedded telling case study design (Yin, 2014). Conducting a case study allowed for a more in-depth analysis and helped to explore the relationship between the phenomenon and its environment (Yin, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Mitchell (1984) notes that case studies “show how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances.” He further defines a telling case as one “in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case, serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent (p. 239-40).” The context for this case study consisted of a Doctoral granting university with very high research activity and a Baccalaureate/Associate College in the Western United States. The cases within each context are the SGAs and the embedded units of analysis are the members of the SGAs who will be interviewed.

Conducting an embedded, multiple case study allows for a more robust study and data analysis as well as offer a closer look into the context in which an organization or a case resides (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). The cases were bounded by location (higher education institutions in Nevada) and a period of time (an academic semester). Some challenges identified with an embedded, multiple case study design pertains to a researcher’s inability to refrain from solely focusing on the subunit of analysis as well as requiring additional time and resources beyond a researcher means (Yin, 2014). When using this methodology,

researchers must use the unit of analysis and sub-units of analysis to reinforce research questions in relation to the case within the context.

The justification for choosing an embedded multiple case study design is due to an attempt to preserve student voice to relay their perceptions of influencing institutional policies and participating in campus governance. Also, the relationship between students in SGAs and the context in which the organization resides was explored and best analyzed in an embedded case study design. The respective institutional governance structures assisted in understanding the culture of an institution. Cultural traditions, hierarchical structures, and an institution's mission/vision statements may indicate the level of comfort in including students in campus governance decisions. In addition to a within-case analysis, I also conducted a cross-case analysis, or comparative study (Yin, 2014), that compared and contrasted similarities and differences within SGAs and across institutional types.

Purpose

Utilizing aspects of Role Theory (RT) and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identify Development, this multi-site embedded, telling case study explored the experiences of undergraduate students participating in campus governance through Student Government Associations (SGAs) across various institutional types (i.e., a Baccalaureate/Associate granting institution and a Research one Doctoral granting institution with very high research activity in Nevada), while investigating the various roles that students have in the informal or formal governance processes at their respective institution.

Research Questions

The topic of undergraduate students in SGAs who participate in campus governance is largely under researched and often disregarded until an issue arises where an institution deems it

necessary to involve students. Some institutions are reactive instead of proactive in addressing student concerns on campus. Therefore, the following questions were constructed to assist with this study:

1. What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes? (*Bess & Dee, 2008; Rizzo et. al, 1970*)
2. How do student members of SGAs perceive their role in campus governance at the institutional level? (*McGrath, 1970; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999*)

The interview questions were grounded in Role Theory and Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development. They sought to highlight various campus governance structures and student perception of their value in campus governance processes.

Interview Sites

The interview sites that were selected to carry out this research project are located in the Western region of the United States of America, specifically in the Western United States. The sites selected were: University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) (a Research one Doctoral degree granting institution with very high research activity) and College of Southern Nevada (CSN) (a Baccalaureate/Associate degree granting institution). These particular sites were selected due to the institutional governance structures and missions, populations served, and structures of their SGAs.

In addition to the reasons listed above, these sites were also chosen due to the accessibility, do-ability, and culture of the institutions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Research regarding student involvement in campus governance is limited in this area of the US. In addition to the environment at the respective institutions, the political climate is also an important aspect to consider when discussing the role of SGAs at colleges and universities in Nevada and will be discussed later in this chapter. Additionally, the reporting line and overall organizational

structure of the two SGAs are vastly different, with the SGA at UNLV reporting to the state governing body (NSHE) and the SGA at CSN reporting to the institution.

The information provided below represents information from the state governing body, a CSN, and UNLV. As previously stated, examining various institutional types allows for a within case analysis as well as a cross case analysis to be conducted.

Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE)

Nevada is similar to many other states in that its overall mission is to holistically educate students. The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is the state governing body for all colleges and universities consisting of four community colleges, one state college, two universities, and one research institute (NSHE, 2016). The limited availability of higher education institutions is particularly interesting due to the growing population in Nevada of college going students (US Census, 2014). The composition of NSHE consists of 13 elected individuals to embody the Nevada Board of Regents (BOR) (NSHE, 2016).

Listed in BORs handbook are rules and regulations that govern the SGAs in the institutions that are under their domain. According to NSHE, Student Government is defined as “[an] association of students within NSHE whose constitution has been approved by the Board of Regents of the NSHE” (NSHE Handbook, 2015, p. 5). Defining SGAs and providing a guideline for governing indicates a commitment from the State of Nevada and NSHE in ensuring its relevance in the governance of their respective institutions. Additionally, NSHE states:

The Student Body Organization, in exercising authority granted by its constitution, shall conform to rules, regulations and policies as established by the Board of Regents, and to all applicable statutes of the State of Nevada” (NSHE Handbook, 2015, p. 5). “Student associations shall follow all of the policies and fiscal management procedures expected of other units within the institution...The constitution of each student association will guide budget development and execution and no constitutional provision shall conflict with Board of Regents policy and generally accepted accounting principles for colleges and universities. The objective of these principles is to meet the public trust obligations for

stewardship and accountability, necessitating a system of accounting and reporting that will insure full disclosure of the results of operations and financial position of the funds (NSHE Handbook, 2015, p.6).

This statement suggests that constitutions of SGAs under NSHE are reviewed and approved by the BOR and that any amendment to them would require approval. In addition, it clearly states the role of a SGA as it relates to supporting the BOR and NSHE policies and suggests that the *policies and fiscal management* of the SGA should mimic those of all units within their respective institution (NSHE Handbook, 2015, p. 6). Since NSHE clearly defines the organizational structure and overall roles of the SGA, one could consider that a conflicting interest may exist between the SGA and institutional administration.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) is a large doctoral granting institution with very high research activity. A doctoral granting institution is defined as “institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the update year” (Indiana University, 2017). The mission of this institution encompasses a variation of goals and benchmarks that serve as a mechanism that governs the university.

UNLV diverse faculty, students, staff, and alumni promote community well-being and individual achievement through education, research, scholarship, creative activities, and clinical services. We stimulate economic development and diversification, foster a climate of innovation, promote health, and enrich the cultural vitality of the communities that we serve (UNLV, 2015).

A mission statement should serve as a master plan for the business operations of the university, but it should also provide a clear picture of what the university is not (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). UNLV’s mission statement suggests that all vested parties have an active role in moving the university forward. It appears that UNLV aspires to implement a shared

governance model that includes the voices of faculty, staff, and students in the governance process.

UNLV's student population is over 30,000 and its ethnic breakdown is 16% Asian American, 8% African American, 29% Hispanic/Latino, and 32% White (NCES, 2017). The student demographics of this institution classify it as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) having the designation of a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution (AANAPISI). An institution MSI status is an accountability measure in ensuring that an institution is committed to providing support to their minority population (Gasman, 2008) NU was chosen because it is an institution with a mission to serve the public and encourage students to participate in the governance process. The unique funding structures of public institutions, primarily being funding by the state or national government, should provide a welcoming climate for SGA members to participate in campus governance processes.

SGA. The undergraduate SGA at UNLV, known as Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (CSUN), appears to have a more formal structure than its counterpart at CSN. Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 396 the SGA was required to draft a constitution in which to govern the organization (UNLV, 2015). The mission statement of UNLV's SGA mentions being "the representative governing body of the undergraduate student population..." (UNLV, 2015). This SGA has an Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branch and is structured like a true government organization and its constitution states "[CSUN], to the extent of its authority set forth in the Constitution and bylaws, is self-governing and independent of the administration of the University of Nevada system, financially and otherwise" (UNLV,

2015, p. 2). The aforementioned statement clearly states the governance structure of the SGA at UNLV being completely separate from its institution.

Executive branch. The Executive Branch consists of the executive board members (president, vice president, and senate president) and is the overseer for all SGA activities.

Additionally, there are a number of expectations of the Executive Board:

- Shall have general powers of administration, review, and recommendation;
- Shall be chaired by the President;
- Shall nominate candidates for all appointed positions unless otherwise specified in the Constitution;
- Shall specific the duties of all officials that they appoint or nominate provided those duties do not conflict with the Constitution or its bylaws;
- Shall nominate candidates for all judicial offices including the positions of Chief Justice and Associate Chief Justice, to be approved by the Senate; and
- Shall examine all proposed statues and amendments to the Constitution and give recommendations for approval or disapproval to the Senate. (UNLV, 2015, p. 5).

In addition to being comprised of the executive board, the organization also contains departmental representatives: Directors, Assistant Directors, and respective Board Members. The duties of the departmental representative are to, “maintain operating policies, which are approved by the Senate” (UNLV, 2015, p. 6).

Legislative branch. The Legislative Branch is comprised of the actual SGA Senate and is the voting body of the SGA that consists of 25 representatives from each college on campus. The Senate seats are established by the amount of SGA members enrolled in each of the nine colleges with each college receiving at least one seat on the senate (UNLV, 2015). The following are the duties and responsibilities of the Senate:

- The Senate shall be empowered to enact any legislation that falls under the jurisdiction of the CSUN;
- Senate approval is required to disburse CSUN funds except where otherwise delated in [the] Constitution;
- Shall possess all powers and responsibilities not specifically delegated by the Constitution or its bylaws to any other entity;

- Shall be empowered (with two-thirds vote) to: enact, amend, rescind and temporarily suspend bylaws; sustain impeachment charges; refer proposals to the membership; approve judicial nominees; dismiss officials, unless otherwise specified in this Constitution; grant or rescind permission given to the Executive Board to make expenditures of up to \$500 without specific approval provided such expenditures are reported to the Senate at the following senate meeting; override presidential vetoes; initiate constitutional amendments; and override the dismissal of a Senator.
- Shall be empowered (with majority vote) to: issue directives to CSUN officers and officials; adopt resolutions; approve nominees of the Executive Board; approve the annual CSUN budget; approve legal agreements between CSUN and any other parties, making them legally binding on CSUN; initiate, amend, rescind, and temporarily suspend any operating policy of all CSUN entities except the Executive Board and the Judicial Council; establish standing and ad hoc committees; and open nominations and appoint eligible nominees for vacant Senate seats. (UNLV, 2015, p. 7-8)

Judicial branch. The Judicial Branch is the keeper of the SGA bylaws, constitution, and hears all cases related to SGA events or activities (UNLV, 2015). This branch consists of nine voting members and the duties and responsibilities of the Judicial Council consists of:

- Shall interpret the Constitution;
- May decide the constitutionality of acts of or within CSUN entities when requested to do so by the Executive or Legislative Officer;
- May invalidate an improperly conducted election;
- Shall be responsibility for ensuring due process;
- May act as an arbitrator between CSUN members and entities of the University of Nevada System;
- May consult legal counsel before rendering decisions;
- Shall meet at least once in the first month of each academic semester;
- Shall publish an operating policy at their first meeting of each semester, and present it to the Senate at the first senate meeting in both October and in March;
- Shall have five CSUN business days, upon receiving a case, to accept or refuse to hear a case;
- Shall have 10 CSUN business days, upon acceptance of a case, to produce a written decision. (UNLV, 2015, p. 8-9)

In addition to the Judicial Council, the Constitution of UNLV's SGA also discusses the duties and responsibilities for the Advisory Board as the following:

- CSUN shall work in good faith with UNLV's Vice President of Student Affairs and attempt to formulate a mutually agreeable bylaw for the creation of an advisory board.

- The authority for the advisory board may be held within the office of UNLV's Vice President of Student Affairs (UNLV, 2015, p. 8-9).

College of Southern Nevada (CSN)

CSN is a large Baccalaureate/Associate degree granting institution. According to the Indiana University, "Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges includes four-year colleges (by virtue of having at least one baccalaureate degree program) that conferred more than 50 percent of degrees at the associate's level" (Indiana University, 2017). At CSN, the student population is over 33,000 and consists of 10% Asian American, 10% African American, 32% Hispanic/Latino, and 32% White (NCES, 2015). Conducting research at a Baccalaureate/Associate college may be difficult due to the transient nature of its student body. However, this college addresses its desire for shared governance in its values statement, "communication across multiple campus sites among our faculty, staff, and students, and with local partnerships and state communities" (CSN, 2015).

SGA. The mission statement of the SGA, known as the Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada (ASCSN), at this institution seeks to "involve students in the mission, philosophy, and goals of the CSN and to offer the student voice to the administration..." (ASCSN Constitution, 2015, p. 3). The encouragement of its members to be involved in the university and administrative processes is evident in their mission and value statement at this institution. The SGA at CSN also mentions that one of their goals for the upcoming school year is to "provide accountability for student service" (CSN, 2015). The composition of this SGA is comprised of an Executive Board and a Senate.

Executive board & senate. The Senate of the SGA is comprised of the Executive Board and the elected Senators. The Senate's duties and responsibilities consist of the following:

The ASCSN Senate shall have general deliberative authority over the affairs of the ASCSN membership including allocation of student activities' general funds, recognition and review of student clubs and student organizations, participation in college committees which require student representation, and other such business pertaining to the interests and general welfare of the student body. (ASCSN Constitution, 2015, p. 7)

While the aforementioned are needed services and events for students at CSN, it is evident that ASCSN does not participate in the institutional governance processes or share in the governance of the overall institution.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected using a purposeful and snowball method (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Participants that met the selection criteria (either an Executive Board member or general body member of a SGA and a senior level administrator and/or faculty members that had experience working with the SGA) and consented were interviewed once for approximately 45-60 minutes. Executive board members were contacted using the information provided on the SGA website and helped to find general body members to participate in the study. At acceptance, the participant was given or emailed the consent form that was discussed in detail at the time of the interview.

Administrators and/or faculty members participating in the study were recruited using information from the SGA website as well as those that were present at the general body meeting of the SGA. Administrators and/or faculty members participating in this study had direct knowledge of the operations and the institutions expectations of the SGA and its members.

Below is Table 1 that illustrates the various methods that were utilized to collect data during this study and the origin of the data.

Data Collection

Table 1: Data Collection Plan

Data Collected	Plan and Process
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student members of SGAs ● Administrators (senior level with current/prior experience working with SGA members) ● Field notes of Non-verbal cues indicating a variety of emotions ● Verbatim transcription of recorded interviews ● Thematic analysis of interviews will be conducted
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SGA executive board meetings; SGA general body meetings; social interactions between members ● Field notes of verbal and non-verbal cues indicating a variety of emotions ● Thematic analysis will be conducted
Content Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SGA bylaws and other relevant documents (meeting agendas (current and prior), meeting minutes, etc.); NSHE bylaws and other documents ● Thematic analysis will be conducted

A content analysis was conducted of the websites, bylaws, constitutions, meeting minutes and agendas to gain an insight into the operations of both organizations relevant to this study. In addition to printed material, a thorough review of each SGA website was conducted. Analyzing

websites helped gauge the structure of an organization, as well as the commitment from an institution to provide space to market their organization and publicly voice their concerns. Websites also highlighted essential events and policies that are important. The rationale for the collection of the data mentioned above was to provide more credibility to the study (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Observations and document analysis added contextual information that supported and disputed data collected during interviews.

The bylaws and constitutions offered a set of guidelines for the organization and the agreed upon duties and responsibilities between the executive board and the general body members. Likewise, archival documents such as previous meeting minutes and agendas helped identify previous and current institutional policies that arose. The analysis of archival documentation validated information retrieved from personal interviews and assisted with triangulation of data between the content analysis, interviews, and observations.

In addition to a content analysis, individual interviews were conducted. The goal for this study was to conduct 10-12 interviews: 8-10 student government members and executive board members, 1-2 faculty advisor(s), and a Vice President of Student Affairs or an administrator with an equivalent position. Each interview was conducted in person at a location that was convenient for the participant unless scheduling conflicts arose. If there was a conflict with scheduling, an alternative date was provided. All interviews were semi-structured to allow for flexibility in questioning and follow up questions. Also, each interview was audio recorded, unless otherwise stated or by the objection of a participant. Audio recording was conducted to ensure accuracy in the transcription process. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher and using the InqScribe software. Follow-up conversations regarding interviews or additional questions were conducted if needed. Each interview was then coded by hand, and an individual open

coding process was created (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Once the interviews were coded separately and themes emerged, a within case analysis was completed. As Yin states, examining documentation provides the researcher with accurate information that can be reviewed repeatedly, is unobtrusive information that is created outside the realm of the study, and information that can be both "specific and broad" (2014, p. 125-126).

Observations of both SGA's general body and ad hoc committee meetings were conducted several times throughout the data collection process as well. The number of students attending the meetings, whether or not administrators attended, and the structure of the meetings provided insight into the perceived value of the organization.

Table 2 is the Data Analysis Plan that highlights data sources and analysis technique that will be utilized in this study.

Data Analysis

Table 2: Data Analysis Plan

Sample Interview Questions * Research Question*	Data Source(s)	Analysis Technique(s)
* What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content Analysis (Bylaws, Meeting Agendas, Meeting Minutes, other organizational documents) ● Interviews with SGA members and Administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Latent and Manifest coding (Babbie, 2016) ● Use of theoretical framework (Rizzo et al, 1970). ● Verbatim Transcription and thematic coding
* How do student members of SGAs perceive their role in campus governance at the institutional level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with SGA members ● Observations of SGA executive and general body meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of theoretical framework (Rizzo et al, 1970). ● Verbatim Transcription and thematic coding
What experiences encourage or hinder SGAs from participating in the informal or formal institutional governance processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content Analysis (Bylaws, Meeting Agendas, Meeting Minutes, other organizational documents) ● Interviews with SGA members and Administrators ● Observations of SGA executive and general body meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Latent and Manifest coding (Babbie, 2016) ● Verbatim Transcription and thematic coding
How do senior level administrators perceive the roles of SGAs in governance processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with Senior level administrators ● Informal observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of theoretical framework (Rizzo et al, 1970). ● Verbatim Transcription and thematic coding ● Member checking
How do the relationships between senior level administration and the SGA influence the SGAs participation in the informal or formal institutional governance processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with SGA Members ● Interviews with Senior Level Administrators ● Observations of meetings with SGA Executive Board members and Senior Level Administrators and/or Faculty members (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of theoretical framework (Rizzo et al, 1970). ● Verbatim Transcription and thematic coding ● Coding of field notes
In what ways are SGA members participating in governance activities on campus outside of the realm of the SGA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews with SGA members ● Interviews with Senior Level Administrators and/or Faculty members ● Content Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of theoretical framework (Rizzo et al, 1970).

Credibility and Reliability

Ensuring credibility (internal validity) was accomplished by using a variety of techniques using "pattern matching; explanation building; addressing rival explanations; and using a logic model" (Yin, 2014). The aforementioned was highlighted during the data analysis process. The credibility of a study is also contingent upon the competence of the analyst conducting the research. Therefore, I will disclose my academic qualifications.

My educational journey began with the Sociology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After receiving an undergraduate degree, I pursued a graduate degree in Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago specializing in Educational Policy and another graduate degree from Robert Morris University in Management with a specialization in Higher Education Administration. Shortly after working in higher education, I enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to complete my doctorate in higher education leadership with a focus on student affairs administration. As a component of my degree program, I completed three qualitative research courses: qualitative research methodology, advanced qualitative research methodology, and case study methodology. Therefore, due to the training I received in this program, I believe I possess the academic qualifications required to meaningfully conduct and analyze the findings from this research study.

Triangulation of data among various sources was another vital component of ensuring credibility that I used, and it aided in providing consistency among findings. Triangulation, as Yin (2014) describes, should lead to a convergence of evidence. Having various sources of data corroborated the findings of the study and helped establish credibility. Data collected from participant interviews; observation notes from meetings and SGA interactions; content analysis of archival documents, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes were triangulated to look for

emerging themes across the data. To protect the study and establish internal validity, no inferences were made. As Yin (2014) states, "every time an event cannot be directly observed, [an inference is made]" (p. 47). Because of the familiarity with this subject and previous experiences working with students in SGAs, refraining from making inferences and assumptions was key to establishing credibility.

Researcher reliability was preserved with meticulous data collection, storage, and triangulation of data. Trustworthiness was achieved through building relationships between participants and interview sites. Those relationships were formed by conducting the interviews in a location and time that was both comfortable and convenient for participants. Participants were given the option of discontinuing the interview at any time if they became uncomfortable with any interview questions.

Ethical Issues

As with any study that seeks to expose or explore issues that may be deemed as uncomfortable to participants has a risk. Challenging programs and platforms that have been in place since the existence of a college or university may be uncomfortable for some administrators and students. While it is never a researcher's intention to bring about chaos, the line of questioning or findings from this study might have become uncomfortable to certain participants. Therefore, all participants and interview sites were kept anonymous and participants had the option to opt out of the study at any point.

In addition to protecting participant identifiable information, an IRB was completed to ensure adherence to federal regulations when conducting research using human subjects. Securing IRB approval protected the integrity of the research process, that participation in

interviews was kept voluntary, and that the benefits of conducting a research study outweighed the risks of participants involved in the study.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research methodology that was used to conduct this study. Topics discussed included: philosophical assumptions pertaining to student governance, research design, purpose, research questions, site selection, participant selection, data collection and analysis procedures, and a discussion regarding credibility, reliability, trustworthiness, and ethics. Through this research study, my goal was to contribute to the field of higher education by providing recommendations for improving the collaboration between administrators and students in institutional governance by serving as an advocate for student voice in this process. Chapter 4 will give a detailed account of the results of this multiple site embedded qualitative case study by referencing each case and providing a cross-case analysis among sites and SGAs.

CHAPTER 4 – VOICES THAT MATTER

This chapter will examine how undergraduate members of Student Government Associations at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the College of Southern Nevada navigate their roles in the SGA while exploring their perceptions of student involvement in campus governance processes. The data in this chapter are organized to address the research questions presented in Chapter 3 that explores institutional experiences, role ambiguity and conflict, and self-perceptions of involvement among members and administrators working with students in these organizations. I examined institutional type and mission; organizational (institution and SGA) structure, operations, and behaviors; and communication among faculty, staff, and students.

Interview questions were crafted to examine whether role ambiguity or conflict exists among SGA members and administration. When exploring organizational behavior, defining and clarifying roles among members is vital to understanding this dynamic. Clearly defined roles within an organization set behavioral limits and help standardize behavior among members (Bess & Dee, 2008). Setting these expectations among organizational members serves as a contract between members and authority figures within that particular organization. However, if those roles are not communicated or discussed, role ambiguity and conflict can appear. Due to the governance structure of the institutions and the SGA, Role Ambiguity is examined through questions of hierarchy and various methods of communication while Role Conflict is examined through questions of authority and power. Both concepts could help expose any experiences that hinder or encourage participation in the respective SGA.

Utilizing four of Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development, I explored the perceptions of students and staff at both CSN and UNLV as it related to handling various SGA

responsibilities. This chapter examines whether SGA members had the necessary skills needed to participate in such an intricate process within an institution. The students in this chapter discuss perceptions of their organizational structure, operations and behavior; their individual and collective involvement in campus governance processes; and communication efforts involving upper administration and members of their organization. Considering the vast difference in organizational structure, policies, and procedures of governance, I will conclude with comparing the operational processes and interaction within ASCSN and CSUN.

To truly embody the title of this study, *My Voice Matters*, I interviewed a total of five undergraduate students from CSUN at UNLV, one administrator from UNLV, five undergraduate students from ASCSN at CSN, and one administrator from CSN during the 2017-2018 school year. Appendices E and F provide a breakdown of the participants demographics. Choosing participants for this study proved to be difficult due to the availability of those students in both SGA's. Through this interaction, I learned a great deal about student leaders at commuter campuses and grew to respect the competing priorities for their time. In addition to scheduling challenges, during several interviews, specifically at UNLV, student leaders were not as forthcoming with information regarding CSUN or their experiences in CSUN. It was evident early in the conversations that students were not comfortable speaking with an *outsider* regarding organizational operations.

Conversely, members of ASCSN at CSN were open, available, and eager to discuss the pros and cons of their organizations and their experiences within ASCSN. One additional concern throughout this study dealt with the fluidity of these positions. Each year, these positions are occupied with students varying in ideas, opinions, and values. However, although each

organization has a potential change in leadership each year, only a small number of students left their SGA at UNLV or CSN due to graduation.

The students interviewed from CSUN and ASCSN represented a variety of positions within their respective SGA. These students held higher level administrative positions as well as the position of Senator representing various colleges and campuses at UNLV and CSN. In addition to the variance in positions within the SGA, these students represented a wide range of demographic characteristics: varying in age, ethnicity, and employment status. Although both organizations provided a stipend for officers depending on their title within the organization, many SGA members were forced to seek additional employment outside of their demanding SGA role. These students also represented a variety of majors across the university and varied in enrollment status at their respective school, some being transfer students. Similarly, their stories of how they became interested in student governance ranged as well.

In the pages that follow, I will relay the stories of students at both institutions as it relates to the research questions from this study:

- What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes?
- How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in the decision-making processes at their institution?

After addressing the research questions, I will compare and contrast the two SGAs and present a summary of my findings.

Research question 1: What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes?

Choosing to serve

Exploring why students chose to join student government could offer insight into a variety of values and beliefs as an individual. Choosing an extracurricular activity that is not only time consuming, but one that encompasses a high level of accountability requires an individual to consider a variety of things before choosing to serve. Some students viewed this merely as a job and means to pay tuition, while others viewed joining Student Government as a way to advocate for student rights or a specific cause. One particular Senator at CSN became interested due to a need that was unfulfilled by the administration and the SGA. She stated,

...[one of the other senators] overheard me having a conversation about how I felt about the African American women being 7% of the graduation [rate]...so 93% of [them] were not graduating and I wanted to find out why, so since I enrolled that became my priority, I wanted to know what it was that hindered [them from graduating]... so when he overheard me, he said there is going to be a senator position available...so he kind of helped me. (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

Choosing to advocate for such a cause requires that an individual have various characteristics outlined in Chickering's Seven Vectors as discussed in Chapter 3, such as developing purpose and integrity. These vectors speak to self-advocacy, advocacy for something more significant than the individual, as well as acknowledging a moral and ethical compass to decision making. This particular student saw a problem in the college and joined an organization that she felt could advocate on behalf of those marginalized students. Her stance on this topic became her driving force for seeking change within the institution.

A student at UNLV simply felt the need to be more involved in campus affairs,

the reason why [I joined the SGA] is because I felt like I could be doing a lot more on campus...I wanted to I guess expand my involvement...so I knew a few people that were involved in student government, so I reached out to some folks and asked them how do I get involved, went to my first meeting and from there became involved" (L.N., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

This particular student felt an innate responsibility to become more involved in campus activities. Although both institutions boast an active student life, this particular student chose to join the SGA over other organizations. Chickering's Vector, *Developing Integrity*, addresses the need of students to develop a life mission and evaluate their values and beliefs. By joining the SGA, this student is taking a step towards developing integrity.

A student from UNLV credits her friends for their involvement in student government,

...I am close friends with [name redacted] ...and I pretty much helped him campaign. He was really impressed. Um, and asked me to be his chief of staff. And I was new to student government and um my initial reaction was no. CSUN is a lot of drama; no thank you. He kept persisting. Like no, you would be a valuable asset. So as soon as I decided to [join] excuse my language but shit kind of hit the fan. (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017).

While a student at CSN re-counts her decision to join,

I was recruited by the previous president [name redacted], and the way I was recruited I was in an international student organization club...and I just joined in with the letter of intent...I wanted to promote students like me who struggle (B.H., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

A UNLV student states,

I heard about student government through email which is pretty crazy to say [I] didn't know anything about it until I got the emails the things that I have heard about it were not good things. When I went to interview the thing that stuck out to me most is someone saying we need you in here...there are not a lot of people like me...I guess that would mean open minded maybe, so that made me stay... (J.C., personal communication, February 5, 2018)

While most students cite a specific cause or invitation to join, this particular student mentioned that it was a complete accident. He states,

...I went to my honors society and saw a little form that said would you like to be involved in student government and I didn't even know what student government was...I'd seen CSUN stuff around, but I never knew what it stood for or what they did...next thing I knew, I was giving them a pitch as to why I should be in student

government...then I got appointed, and I was in student government so literally it was an accident for me. (A.J., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

Although not a part of his original plan when deciding to attend UNLV, this student has found his niche with student government and has indeed embodied his position as a representative for students in his college.

A student from CSN shares his experience,

I chose to get involved because when I saw an opportunity like this I was thinking it would look good on a resume and it would look good for my future endeavors so as a political science major I thought it would help me get into government and see how it's ran and how a group like student government can run a whole college institution (L.H., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

The aforementioned speaks to a variety of reasons why students chose to participate in their respective SGA. However, the underlying motivation seems to indicate the students desire to be more involved in their institution and advocate for the rights of students.

Too much power or not enough?

An emergent theme throughout this study centered on power and authority. Several members mentioned incidents involving abuse of power among SGA members ranging from appointments of officers to changing policies and procedures within the organizations. Fear was evident among several members in both SGAs when speaking of the future of the organizations. To understand power dynamics with these organizations and across the institutions, governance structures must be examined.

CSUN is governed by a provision in Chapter 396.547(2) of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and states, "CSUN, to the extent of its authority set forth in the Constitution and bylaws, is self-governing and independent of the administration of the University of Nevada System, financially and otherwise" (1983). This statement could be interpreted in many ways; however,

the premise is that CSUN and its members control the operation of the organization. Allowing undergraduate students to have this amount of power, autonomy, and authority has the potential to be problematic without proper training and guidance and could prove detrimental if disagreements arise between members and university administrators. Ensuring students are equipped to handle the multifaceted nature of governance and advocacy requires a detailed training process. Student groups had this amount of power in the past, an opponent of this states,

...the admission of students to important academic bodies would so alter the balance of power within them that, in fact, virtual control would shift from the board, the administration, and the faculty to the students...[with this level of power] they have caused teachers and administrators of whom for one reason or another they disapproved to be removed and other acceptable substitutes to be appointed. They have been able to halt the erection of some buildings...they have caused the radical revision of admission standards (McGrath, 1970, p. 61).

Granting students this level of power has historically changed the trajectory of various policies and procedures in higher education. However, since its inception, CSUN has operated with this amount of power. According to a staff member, during his tenure, he has not seen an abuse of power by CSUN members.

I think they use [their power] to the students' advantage, they always have what's good for the students at the forefront and because of the power granted to them they are not afraid to use their voice and take in the student's voice and project it to the administration" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

He continues,

...somewhere along the history, someone said we are going to give these students ultimate power. I have never seen this model anywhere else, so I think that is one of the biggest things [that UNLV] said is yes, we support students because we've given students so much power that they can do whatever they want. Luckily that has been a good thing, but if we get a bad [Executive] board there goes the school... (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

This quote is concerning because of the potential change in power each academic year. As mentioned above, all positions for both SGAs are only for one academic year, meaning the vision of the SGA could potentially change each year. With the change in leadership, abuse of power is a possibility.

Several CSUN members described this power struggle at UNLV. This particular student highlighted the bureaucracy that exists among SGA members and administration regarding power,

I think there's a power struggle every once in a while, I think they [Administration] get confused as to who we are and what we stand for...you'll have a meeting with someone on campus, and they view you as a student, and they are the administrators, so they will automatically take a well I'm in charge here role. They don't understand that I'm not speaking about what I want but all the undergraduates (A.J., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

This CSUN member addressed various issues of power and authority that is prevalent between students and administrators. A CSUN student described the structure of the SGA as it relates to control, "...I've been told plenty of times that UNLV is unique because student government actually do hold quite a bit of power compared to some other institutions, I've heard they basically can't do anything..." (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017). Similarly, a staff member working with CSUN stated, "this is one of the most unique student governments, they are recognized as an entity next to the college and not part of the institution. [This] gives them a lot more power, which can be good or bad..." (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018). With this amount of power and authority, proper mentoring should be in place to assist these leaders. However, in speaking with the staff working with both organizations, it is clear that they are there to offer advice and serve as an overseer of the organization.

I very much work for them...where previously I was more the one pushing them along when I was in Nebraska [as an advisor to that SGA], so it's very different because now

they push me along... We can advise them, but ultimately they can say hey we're still going to do this...but we're the ones that if they want to go on a trip, we book their travel and accompany them but they are definitely the ones in the driver seat making the decisions" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

This quote lays the foundation for a staff member's in the organization. When probed further, staff members from both organizations believed that students in these SGAs should solicit their opinion more often and seek out their advice when planning various activities. This revelation sparked a concern regarding role conflict and ambiguity among the advisor position.

On the other hand, ASCSN states,

ASCSN Student Government is an entity empowered by the Board of Regents, is supported by state statute, and is created by the Constitution of the Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada. ASCSN Student Government is granted all of its authority from its constitution" (ASCSN Constitution, article 1(1), p. 6, 2014). In Article 3, section 1, the ASCSN constitution states,

The exclusive control and administration of ASCSN Student Government is vested by the Board of Regents in an elected student senate known as the ASCSN Senate. All financial transactions of ASCSN Student Government are subject to legal review by CSN's institutional president or his designated officer" (ASCSN Constitution, p. 7, 2014).

These statements allow ASCSN to have autonomy regarding most of its operations except financial transactions. This statement provides a provision for CSN to intervene in economic matters concerning ASCSN.

A staff member working with ASCSN mentioned the lack of boundaries for students in the SGA,

...I know there will be members of student government that had no problem going to financial services asking for different reports...then financial services will call me and be like 'hey you got somebody over here asking for reports...that's more like something that should fall under more of a chain of command...so they'll get mad, and you know say you know who does this person think they are? (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

In addition to serving as a general advisor to the organization, the advisor of ASCSN provides a financial update at their ASCSN monthly meetings. During this report, the advisor recommended that students be mindful of their spending and be more fiscally responsible with their budget.

While this was a cautionary statement, the advisor does not have the authority to interfere with any financial decisions that ASCSN makes (ASCSN Bylaws, 2014). The ASCSN staff member states that the amount of power that is given to students has an adverse effect.

You know [they(students)] get a big head and [say] I can go to this meeting and that meeting. I'm on this institutional committee. So when I walk in your office and you know you tell me I need an appointment, it's like wait a minute. Like what do you mean?... Our students now, that's what they do. They're like they don't see that boundary... (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

This quote speaks to the lack of regard for the reporting structures that exist within institutions.

This brings about a concern that the advisor discussed,

I think if you're operating under the fact that students should be seen and not heard and you send out an email saying you know [name redacted] get your kids under control, who do they think they are asking for this report...without an appointment...[administration] has to embrace who our student population is, and that's their students...they don't see it as disrespectful...(A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

He further noted that maybe administrators should get trained on how to interact with the millennial student. However, this is an indication of the depth of involvement of the staff at CSN by recognizing that training should occur with not only the students but administration as well.

On the contrary, during one of the SGA meetings that I attended, I observed the SGA staff member at UNLV sitting in the back who only gave a report when it was time for his agenda item. It was clear that the roles of the two staff members varied by institution, with the staff from CSN being a bit more hands-on with the SGA members. When asked about their position, the UNLV staff member stated, "I oversee their budget, but we don't get to tell them yes

or no to anything" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018). When probed about who has the authority to tell them, yes or no he stated,

Probably all the way up to the Board of Regents maybe I don't even know if they have the ability to tell them yes or no either...I think even the President [of UNLV] can tell them something and they say well we're going to do what we want" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

As one can see, the reporting structures and lines of authority are vastly different between the two SGAs but both exhibited extreme amounts of power and authority. This difference in governance structures and authority could impact the organizational goals, mission, and values. Regardless of reporting structure, each SGA in this study has a foundation set on advocating for student rights and providing quality programming for students.

Shared Governance or Dictatorship?

The staff member and a couple of CSUN members discussed a recent disagreement regarding a decision made by the university. On October 1, 2017, Las Vegas, Nevada was home to one of the most horrific mass shootings in the history of the US where 58 people were killed and over 800 injured. Occurring only a few miles from UNLV, the administration decided to keep the campus open the day following the shooting.

...[regarding] the October 1 event students were really upset that school was still being held. Some professors were pretty strict about attending class. I think it would have been better to include the students in on that because they could have given the student perspective about why they should do this. They did a good job after the fact, they came [to a meeting] to explain why the administration did what they did and to see how they can do better next time (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018). However, one of the CSUN members remembers it differently, she states,

...after the [October 1st] shooting the university decided to keep campus open the next day which was in my opinion a horrendous decision and uh students were obviously upset about it, and we got lots of backlash for it. We made it clear that we did not support that decision [to hold classes] (L.N., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

In this instance, the administration made an executive decision that could have been more damaging to students than beneficial. Choosing to ignore the student voice before making that decision was monumental and had a lasting effect on many students in CSUN by not allowing students time to process this disastrous event. The October 1st incident was not mentioned by any members of ASCSN.

When asked about the SGAs participation in institutional decision making, the CSUN staff member states, "CSUN and the university are in agreement on a lot of things...I know Chris [the current President of CSUN] didn't support the fee increase and the university did it." (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

One CSUN student states, "they [administration] keep us pretty informed and so does the president of student government..." (L.N., personal communication, December 6, 2017). One CSUN student mentioned the disconnect between students and administrators as it relates to institutional operations,

I get a lot of emails...but we have 2 emails, our student and faculty one, so I get invited to a lot of things, but I don't know if it comes to my student email or faculty emails, so I don't know if students get those too, but the faculty email invites me to all kind of hiring [activities related to hiring UNLV employees]...although I haven't heard anything from my constituents so that probably means they are not getting contacted. (A.J., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

Another CSUN member weighed how well administration integrates students in the decision-making process,

I wouldn't say upper administration does a good job. I know they have the faculty senate and I notice that they email my SGA email, but I don't get the UNLV today or faculty senate information to my student email account...I think that is unfair to students (J.C., personal communication, February 5, 2018).

She continued to recommend various things to rectify this problem,

It can be included in the rebel news...I think some students will come because some come to CSUN senate meetings...and somehow creating a better campaign for student

government and upper administration to bring students out to [faculty] senate meetings more to tell them that their voice actually matters a campaign around that would be really awesome (J.C., personal communication, February 5, 2018).

Students at ASCSN discussed this matter,

I do know that there were some small issues with the nursing tuition increases per credit hour but we were out there asking students how they feel about it, and they took that into consideration. But ultimately you [administration] have to make the best decision to keep the school running and keep the school up to date...so we're like maybe we don't understand why they made those decisions...but they are open to meeting with us...they are accessible (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

I feel like we don't [participate in institutional governance] at all...I don't think they really ask us [to sit on committees or come to meetings] unless it's required...I mean we went to the open forum for the search for our new President and voiced our concerns, but I feel like, in the long run, it didn't really matter. They just invited us (D.I., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

The quotes by these students indicate a need for improvement in the integration process and the need for open lines of communication between students, faculty, and administration across both campuses. To truly embrace the concept of shared governance, both institutions could improve in bringing student voice to the forefront of institutional decision making.

Support for Leaders: Leadership Development and Mentorship

Both advisors of CSUN and ASCSN are hired to act as a liaison between faculty and students and to ensure all state, and federal laws are upheld. Indirectly, these advisors also serve as a mentor to students. Their job description is also clear that advisors should not interfere with any decisions made by the respective SGA. The CSUN Constitution also states that "members of CSUN have worked in good faith with UNLV Vice President of Student Affairs and actively participated in the development and approval of the initial Position Description for and selection of an Advisor" (2016, p. 9). The statement "participated in the development and approval of the initial position description" implies that students in CSUN not only assisted with writing the job description of their advisor, but they are also a part of the hiring committee. This act speaks to

the authority and power that administration has given to CSUN members to make a higher-level decision regarding employment of an UNLV employee.

The hiring process is another concept that shows the depth of power that each SGA has regarding their decisions. The SGA members have a hand in selecting an advisor; however, the election of SGA members can change each year. Changing members could potentially mean changing viewpoints regarding the choice of an experienced advisor for CSUN. New CSUN members will inherit this advisor and not have the opportunity to choose another individual. This structure could be problematic based on the direction and overall goals of the newly elected SGA members.

With the amount of power that these students have, I became interested in the professional development and mentoring that the SGA should provide in preparing students to handle their responsibilities. Leadership development and mentorship is an essential components in developing students' abilities to think critically and advocate for something greater than themselves. Both advisors are employed through an office that is charged with overseeing student development at their school. Therefore, the institutional support and resources should be available to offer professional development for student leaders. However, when asked about leadership development or mentorship opportunities available for students in the SGA, both advisors and several students from CSUN agreed that either this was not offered, or it could be improved.

One Senator from CSUN stated, "We have code of conduct and diversity training, but there is not really any training per se..." (L.N., personal communication, December 16, 2017). In agreement with students, the staff member working with CSUN has not received any professional development to ensure he is up to date on tools and resources he may need to

support student leaders. He stated, "I've done some professional development things, but nothing directly related to my area" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018). When probed about the development of student leaders, the staff member working with ASCSN stated, "We're expanding our department next year [and] an Assistant Director of Involvement will be added...so not right now, but I definitely think wheels are turning because we want it to happen." (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018). Although CSN has a long way to go, this statement shows the commitment that CSN has to developing their student leaders and those staff that works with them.

On the other hand, students from ASCSN shared their experience with leadership development and mentorship. One senator stated,

...the advisor over ASCSN is kind of the mentor...but prior to that it is recommended that you have some type of mentor...The school offers mentoring programs, but you have to want it for yourself...we do have trainings that help mold us and shape us as a SGA. We attend trainings to strengthen our system [regarding] leadership and how to manage conflict. We just came from a conference in Utah...we talked about gender diversity...and multicultural diversity...and we talked about conflict resolution. (B.V., personal communication, February 8, 2018)

When speaking with the staff member working with ASCSN, it was mentioned that what they offer could be refined:

...one of the things that I ended up changing was [that] we never really had a formal training or hadn't had one in a while. [So for] 2 or 3 days we're going to get together, and we're going to teach you how to be successful at your jobs. We're going to teach you about the student body. We're going to teach you about working together as a team. We're going to teach you how to facilitate meetings and things to that sort...so [I will be] implementing that both for the fall as well as for the spring. (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

The staff member at CSN also discussed having training regarding programming and identifying more purposeful and meaningful programs for the student body. He attributed the lack of training offered for student leaders to lack of experience in this area by the previous advisor, "...like I

said, my colleague [who] was in the role, phenomenal person, but that's not him...he's a veteran affairs guy. Great guy. But his specialty was more Veteran Affairs" (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018). This quote brings up a concerning issue regarding qualifications for an advisor in this area.

Organizational Structure: Diversity and Inclusion

While all of these positions are vital to the operation and success of CSUN, the power that lies within each branch is infinite. Students interested in running for an official position within CSUN must complete an application, be elected by their peers, and give a speech at a general SGA meeting. Their voting procedures mimic that of any government election process.

One of the primary tasks of CSUN is to provide funding opportunities to Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) at UNLV. RSO's petition CSUN through an application process for funding. This process consists of a budget and budget narrative. While attending several CSUN general meetings, I had the opportunity to witness this process. In accordance to Nevada Open Meeting Law, all of CSUN and various student groups provided their narratives and budget requests before the meeting. During the meeting, several groups came before the Executive Branch, Legislative Branch, and Judicial Branch to request funding for various events and activities. However, one particular organization had a particularly difficult time during their presentation.

One organization requested funding for graduation stoles for graduating seniors. It is important to note that this particular organization was the Black Student Union. At this meeting, the organizations before them were able to request funding successfully and were granted funding without questions petitioning the organization's intent. However, when this organization presented their budget narrative, their purpose and origin were questioned by several members of

CSUN. Several senators of color made a statement of concern regarding the line of questioning for this organization, citing that CSUN has funded the same request in the past for other organizations and implying that another issue was at play. Those questioning the budget request cited that CSUN bylaws indicate that funding that is provided to UNLV organizations must serve all students (CSUN Bylaws, 2017). After several minutes of questioning and debate, the organization received the funding that it requested with the agreement that their events be advertised to the entire student body. However, this debate among members of the SGA alluded to a more significant problem regarding the infrastructure of CSUN, specifically speaking to the lack of diversity among its members. Although CSUN has an Assistant Director of Advocacy and Inclusion, several members still cite the lack of diversity as a problem within CSUN.

Similarly, one of the primary tasks of ASCSN is to provide funding opportunities to registered student organizations at CSN. Activities and events are sponsored by a registered student organization who presents its funding request to ASCSN. Similar to the process at CSUN, each organization must come with a narrative regarding the event, anticipated budget for the event/activity, and a formal request for SGA funding. As with CSUN, I had the opportunity to attend several meetings of ASCSN and witness various presentations from student organizations requesting funding. Because ASCSN, like CSUN, must adhere to Nevada Open Meeting Law, the materials were available to the public before the official ASCSN meeting.

After the initial presentation, members of the SGA have the opportunity to ask questions to gain clarification before making a decision. Of the sessions I attended, no student organization was denied funding for an event. However, SGA members were concerned about a particular event that involved the lighting of lanterns and the public safety of the aftermath of that event. The SGA suggested that the organization gather information regarding the environmental hazard

of the activity. From these interactions, it appeared that the SGA members take their power and responsibility to approve programming seriously. While members of CSUN discussed the lack of diversity within CSUN, one member of ASCSN at CSN mentioned diversity as it relates to all avenues in the institution,

I know diversity is a big issue and even though it is something we don't talk about because it is in that grey area...we need to start ensuring that all nations, all cultural backgrounds, all genders, ethnicities, and faiths are represented on a board because when you're talking about a voice of the students, you want it to be inclusive. It should never be that there is one race or 1 gender dominating an area...and that's just to make sure we can be fair and ensure that there is no bias and that everyone's voice is genuinely heard... (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

She continued, "...I have a problem with how our diversity board looks, and I would like to see more diversity on the board for faculty" (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

Issues around diversity and inclusion permeated through various conversations across institutions. With both institutions having a large minority population, many students wondered why the composition of the SGA did not mirror the student body.

Reorganization: What has to go?

Considering this amount of power and autonomy, I asked the staff member for CSUN if he would change some policies behind the operation of the SGA to help solve the power struggle that exists. He stated,

Yes, so right now the senators are not paid very much [so] raising their pay and increasing the GPA requirement would be some positive changes...I would like to see the fee restored. There was a President a couple of years ago that lowered it [but] ultimately that hurt students because that money goes a long way to do more programs/better programming, more scholarships...I would get rid of the Executive Director position because it creates a weird reporting structure. I saw that create some issues with the hierarchy of leadership and I think it's just a position that you don't really need. [I would] strengthen the marketing department, using the university marketing department to offer mentoring would be more professional development for them (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

When asked how he would redesign ASCSN, the staff member stated,

I want to involve more institutional partners...this year both of our trainers were from CAP (Center for Academic and Professional Excellence. I want to involve Title IX and sexual harassment. I want to involve orientation, so students can see exactly what our numbers are. I would also like to involve financial aid and athletics. Because if anybody should know how the institution is ran, it should be the student government members. (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

Several students have opinions regarding the reorganization of their respective SGA. One student in CSUN stated that she would dismantle some of the power dynamics that exist within the organization,

...everyone has a different position, but no one is higher than the other person. I feel like that is good when they are each given their duties. The advisor is the one that works with them. I appreciate that kind of structure...because technically that's how Senate is...everyone is equal within their colleges, but with the executive board, there are a lot of power dynamics that makes it hard to get things done (J.C., personal communication, February 5, 2018).

Another UNLV student offered an extensive amount of information regarding the restructuring of CSUN citing problems with its infrastructure, policies, processes, and operations. She states, "...another thing too that isn't necessarily like written anywhere [regarding spending and budgeting of CSUN] like constitution bylaws is how do these processes work? How do we run?... Like we don't even have an elections manual (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017).

She continued,

I think there is still communication issues. Because if you are having one person, one CSUN person serve on these different committees or represent, how are you making sure they report back to Senate? Or communicate that back to the rest of the student body, and that's an issue that we've run into in the past. That yes we'll have someone in CSUN sit on those committees and attend, but they don't tell us what happened. (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017).

Another student at CSN said he would strengthen communication,

For me, it would look like more team building and team cooperation definitely not just splitting people up in groups of their own campus or committee but grouping them up all together in their own institution so if you're under CSN we all should be working together. If you're at a certain campus you should be working not only with them but with people from other campuses (L.H., personal communication, February 2, 2018).

The aforementioned quotes from students and faculty regarding experiences that encourage or hinder participation in student governance revealed the following:

- Some students had an innate desire to serve in student government while others noticed an unfulfilled need in their institution;
- The power dynamics that exist within CSUN at UNLV lies primarily with SGA members which has the ability to hinder progress;
- There is a lack of mentorship and leadership development training at both institutions to equip students to effectively participate in campus governance;
- Communication between students and administration falters between effective and non-effective;
- SGA members feel a sense of responsibility to the general student body;
- Diversity issues between members of CSUN arose as a hinderance to progress.

Research Question #2: How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in the decision-making processes at their institution?

Am I capable?

The skill set involved in making high-level decisions may include, but is not limited to, attributes noted in Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development described in Chapter 2 and 3: developing integrity, developing purpose, developing competence, and moving through autonomy toward interdependence. For instance, choosing to hire or elect an individual for a position or office (as SGA members are charged to do) requires a variety of the Vectors listed above.

Developing integrity through the hiring process of their advisor, election of new SGA members, distribution of funds to student organizations and various other duties involves

students being able to consider the greater good in their decision making. They must weigh the overall needs of the general student body, the mission, and vision of the SGA when making a decision that affects all students. Through my observations from attending both SGA Senate meetings, members of the SGA were allowed to ask organizations requesting funding questions regarding their events or activities. The questions posed to the student organizations were typically around ensuring that various institutional policies were upheld, their functions were open to the general student body, and that purchases made with the funding were within the guidelines specified by the respective SGA bylaws and constitution.

This particular vector speaks to a student's ability to look beyond internal gratification and understand the value of compromise. This vector encourages students to work collaboratively with other entities for the greater good. Students who excel in this area are not easily influenced by the opinions and values of others but stands firm by taking an objective stance on a topic. One ASCSN Senator speaks to this collaboration, "I do like the transparency that CSN offers...they are always welcoming us to join the HOW committees [committees that assist students with graduation and the transition from being a student] and different faculty committees" (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018). When asked if she is aware of financial decisions that the university makes, she stated,

Definitely yes, we just had our 1.8% increase on tuition, we had a chance to voice our opinions on whether we should have it, we have our new student union being built, so they are having SGA [members] sit in on that committee" (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

When asked about the involvement of students on institutional committees and their overall interaction with administration, the ASCSN staff member stated,

...they'll say you know they want the student government opinion on you know we're having the student unions coming aboard in a couple of months...they'll say hey we

would like student governments input on the design. Student government members are on committees for you know like purposed tuition increases...for both colleges as well as system-wide increases. Student government members like the leadership [and] have standing meetings with different institutional executive administrative members. The caveat with that is that they may not fully embrace them as millennial students. (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018)

Conversely, the CSUN staff member stated,

...they [UNLV administration] invites [the President and Chief of Staff] to events. They are at all of these different events, they know a lot of the Board of Regents by names and have phone calls with administrators and regents. Board of Regents and administration is always at the Senate meetings...President Jessup has been there multiple times. We do receptions with administrators so they can mingle in a less formal setting. I would say they are on the same page with things (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018)

When probed about possible recommendations to improve this process, he stated,

One thing, CSUN president could sit on the leadership team at the University...what better ways to make sure the student's voice is heard than elevating that position to the highest council? I know [CSUN president] has a presentation part at some of them, but I think they can integrate him in quite a bit more... (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018)

One CSUN student expressed the need to be more involved,

...they [administration] never tell us anything about where UNLV is financially, they never tell us what they plan on doing with the money or any of that...I really feel like the administration should come to our meetings and do some kind of report of where we are financially and how the money is being distributed..."(L.N., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

When asked whether or not students from CSUN are invited to sit on committees that hire faculty, the advisor stated, "I don't think so, not that I know of...I don't know any SGA officials that sit on those committees. The colleges tap us to sit on scholarship committees, but I think that's it right now" (K.C., personal communication, February 2, 2018). This quote provides insight into the level of involvement in institutional governance processes. At both institutions,

administrators are seeking the opinions and ideas of members in student government; however, the depth of those interactions is still debatable. Interactions with these students indicate that they are capable in participating in this process but require mentoring and training to be effective.

Paid position or serving the student body?

For official CSUN positions, compensation is provided by UNLV as a stipend in 12 monthly installments. All positions eligible for a stipend must:

maintain eligibility in CSUN; perform the duties associated with their position, as outlined in the CSUN Bylaws; complete weekly marketing hours as assigned by the supervising official of their branch; serve not less than two hours per week under the approval of the Senate President, which shall be published on the official CSUN website (CSUN Bylaws, 404.02.a-e, p. 51, 2017).

Similarly, ASCSN has a compensation model for their student government members as well. However, the structure is slightly different than CSUN. Only ASCSN Senators and Executive Board members are eligible to receive stipends by “working their required hours each week; post[ing] their hours at all Student Government offices; and provid[ing] a means of accountability of hours worked” (ASCSN Bylaws, 7.3, p. 18, 2014). Each member receiving compensations is required to work a specified amount of time on SGA matters.

Due to the multifaceted nature of their SGA appointment, guidelines were established regarding working hours. ASCSN members "may not be compensated for internal senate, committee, and board meetings held by ASCSN Student Government"(ASCSN Bylaws, 5.1, p. 17, 2017). However, they can be compensated for the following,

for time spent in collegiate committee meetings that require their attendance only if the meeting is held during their regular office hours; for time spent in Board of Regents meetings only if the meetings are held during their regular office hours; for time spent in Nevada Student Alliance meetings only if the meetings are held during their regular office hours (ASCSN Bylaws, 5.2-4, p. 17, 2017).

Providing compensation for these roles were debatable among SGA members. Several members expressed distain regarding the compensations and amount of work required stating that the pay should be increased to meet the demand of the positions. On the other hand, one particular member stated that the compensation should be an added benefit and not the driving force of participation.

Clarifying our roles: What should we do?

The interview protocol for this study asked students of both SGAs to define the roles of SGAs and those leaders who participate. Their responses were similar across institutions. One student at UNLV stated,

Our role, I feel like within UNLV is to be the liaison between UNLV and students and to provide students with different funding opportunities', whether it be scholarships or RSO [registered student organization] funding or whatever it may be. The most important things that we could be doing is I think the funding aspect is really important for students and advocating on their behalf and trying not to increase our tuition... (L.N., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

Another CSUN student stated,

The biggest thing is getting the word out to students about what exactly is going on...I've talked to [CSUN member name redacted] to do a campaign about what has CSUN done for you to tell them how their money [is being] spent and that this is what we've done for you...representing and give them [students] a voice because otherwise, they wouldn't have a voice on campus...(A.J., personal communication, December 6, 2017).

One CSUN student mentioned the need for transparency and balance,

I think the most effective thing they [SGA members] could be doing is being transparent about like what they're doing and then like communicating with not only the student body about what they are doing but like to other people they work with...I feel like it's hard for people to be as transparent and communicate what's going on because like they want to appear so put together. I think another thing is not taking on so much...people get burnt out from student government...the most important thing is like really being honest with yourself about like what you can and cannot handle. And taking time for self-care...we're all workaholics in student government (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017).

The need for a work-life balance appeared to be a common theme across both SGAs and embedded throughout the interview process among all students.

One student discussed his/her perception of the roles of an SGA,

I would say that sometimes the administration will approach CSUN like a piggy bank. Like they will come to us saying hey, um, you know like would CSUN be willing to spend X amount of money for police body cameras or for this thing on campus. As much as we want to support it, we do have a limited budget. And there are just some things that student money should not pay for. It should really be the university that pays for that...that shouldn't fall on CSUN, it's student money...we shouldn't have to pay and worry about safety on campus, that should already kind of be a guarantee... (D.B., personal communication, December 11, 2017).

Members of ASCSN had similar ideas of what their role is on campus,

I think student retention, there should be a focus on those things...besides retention, scholarship opportunity, definitely more work-study opportunities that way students can work on campus...we do have an international student organization but if we could focus on ensuring that they are welcomed. Now that we are going into this new area and focusing on the *gray* [referring to topics that were normally not discussed] ...every institution focuses on the black and white...like gender diversity and how to manage how people feel about that and how they are accepted...As far as budgeting and tuition and fee increases...making sure there is no power struggle between students and the institution to where they have to choose between eating tonight and getting a book. (B.V., personal communication, February 9, 2018).

Another ASCSN member stated, "...just communicating, communication, responding to emails, texting, not saying I'll respond to it later, just do it now...not being toxic, not gossiping, not spreading rumors...making it a friendly environment" (D.I., personal communication, February 9, 2018). Her counterpart suggested, "I feel like not everyone in the Senate should be a follower. Like sometimes people should lead their own, sometimes they should have to make their own events and don't just sit there waiting for something to happen" (B.H., personal communication,

February 9, 2018). This student also noted that when planning events, SGA members should be more mindful of schedules and timing of other members.

The staff members for CSUN and ASCSN also had an opinion regarding the roles of student government.

I think portraying voices of students for sure, serving and assessing the needs of the students, making sure they know who the SGA is. Getting out in front of the students, tabling, and sending emails saying who CSUN is and how to get involved. I don't think that CSUN has been really strong with that...Putting money into things for students that students should not have to pay for. There are a lot of fees and things to pay for so having the textbook rental program and the cap and gown program and finding things that they don't think should be paying for stepping up and paying for it. Anything that helps makes the students' life easier or enhances it more (K.C. personal communication, February 5, 2018)

I would say they have to get out and talk to their constituents'. We have some students that are really out there...secondly, I think they can bring the concerns of the students to the administrators more, whether through surveys, through meetings, town hall meetings, workshops. But I think whether its homelessness, whether it's um malnutrition among students, whether it's child care, whether it's not enough classes during certain times of the day, I think student government members should be bringing those issues to the forefront to the administration... (A.B., personal communication, February 16, 2018).

It is clear that students in both SGAs have a perception of their roles in their respective SGA and administration have theirs. Clearly defined roles help move the mission and vision of the SGAs forward and removes the potential negative backlash from misunderstanding or miscommunication.

The aforementioned quotes from students and faculty regarding their perception of the student roles in the decision-making processes at their institutions revealed the following:

- Students at both institutions understood that their main responsibility is to advocate on the behalf of the general student body
- Students at both institutions described working for their SGA as a full-time job
- Ambiguity exists between students and administrators regarding their role in institutional decision making

Cross-Case Analysis: CSUN vs. ASCSN

While conducting this study, I noticed several similarities and differences among the SGAs. Some similarities that were apparent were: serving as the liaison between the student body and university/college administrators; financially supporting student organizations; distributing various scholarships; and providing input to the administration regarding various student-related issues. Both have a similar structure that mimics the US government and follows Robert's Rules of Order for Parliamentary Procedures. Also, both organizations must abide by Nevada Open Meeting Laws and the Nevada State Higher Education Board of Regents.

Significant differences also existed between the SGAs. CSUN is more structured and formal in their decision-making process. During a Senate meeting, specific seats are assigned for CSUN members and the general public. Particular seats were designated for the Executive Board, Senators, as well as the other positions within CSUN. Members of CSUN were largely unapproachable during the Senate meeting. On the other hand, ASCSN was a bit more informal in structure; while they still followed Robert's Rules of Order for Parliamentary Procedures, no seats were assigned for any ASCSN members or the general public. Also, lunch was served, and the environment was more relaxed than CSUN's Senate meeting.

Common Ground

As discussed in detail above, members of both SGAs discussed several experiences that hindered active participation in their respective SGA. Some of the common themes were centered on communication, lack of training and direction for their particular roles, and the overall hierarchical structure of the SGA. Many members discussed the ineffective lines of communication within the SGA and among the SGA and the administration. This complaint largely coincides with the structure of the SGA. Members of both SGAs discussed the lack of

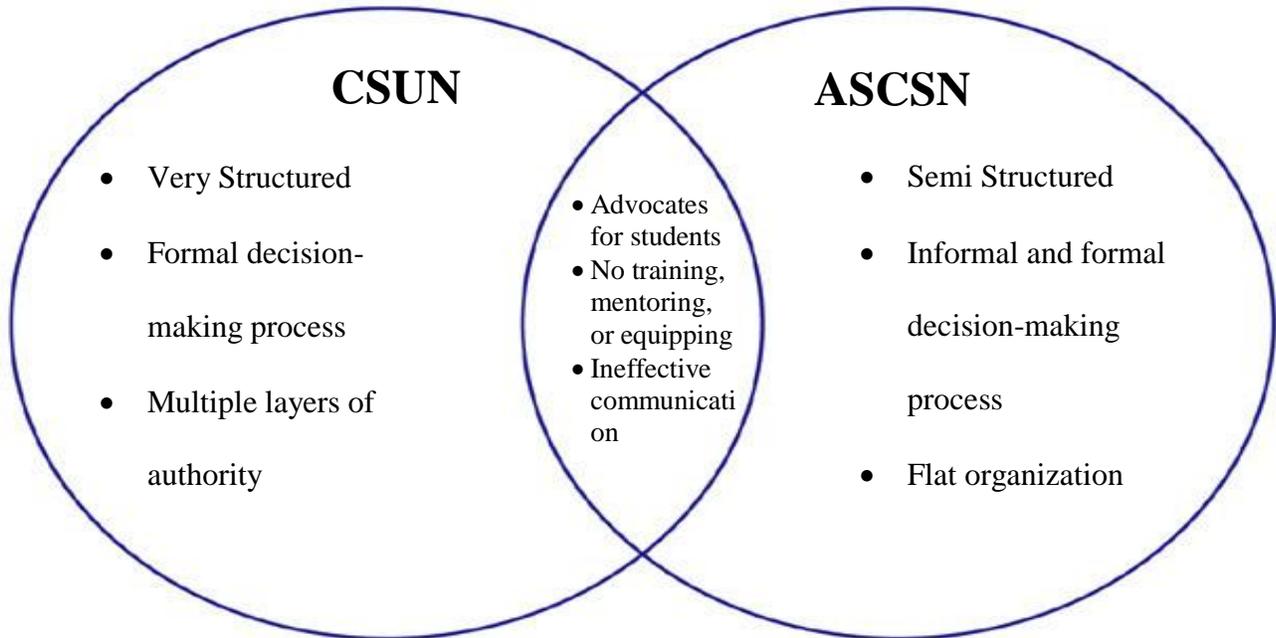
communication within the organization and from college/university administrators. The main complaint from the internal dialogue of the SGA was that the bureaucracy and hierarchical structure of the SGA makes it difficult to disseminate information to the proper individuals promptly. As it relates to communication efforts by the institution, members discussed the power dynamics that exist among administration and SGA members as the most significant barrier to communication efforts.

Many members also expressed an interest in participating in professional development, training, or mentoring opportunities to increase the effectiveness of the SGA. The lack of training or mentoring opportunities proved to hinder students from being as effective and efficient as they would like in their respective roles. Neither SGA offered training on leadership, communication, or any of the other characteristics needed to run an organization successfully. Additionally, a lack of mentoring exists within these organizations. As students are preparing to take on leadership roles or merely a different position within the SGA, before the 2017-2018 school year, a mentoring program was not offered. By recognizing the need for a mentoring program, both SGAs implemented an internship program geared at helping students be prepared for their role as a Senator. However, mentoring and training for Executive Board and other vital positions within the SGA still does not exist.

Some institutional experiences that encouraged students to participate in the SGA were centered on helping the institution to fulfill a need or solve a problem as well as attempting to dissolve various barriers that exist within the institution. A couple of students in both SGAs spoke about an innate need to be more involved in their respective school and partner with the administration to address student concerns.

Members in both SGAs discussed how they perceived their role as well as the overall role of the SGA within their institution. The commonality among institutions is that the SGA exists to advocate for student concerns. Members of both SGAs understand their positions to serve as the liaison between students and administration. Through this study, it became apparent that the roles of these organizations are vastly different than when they were initially implemented. To summarize the findings listed in the chapter, Figure 1 below illustrates the differences and similarities that exist among SGA organizations.

Figure 1: Venn Diagram illustrating the differences and similarities among both institutions



Conclusion

Joined by the unique need to advocate for something more substantial than themselves and the overwhelming desire to be involved at their respective institution, students in both SGAs revealed positive and negative experiences regarding their involvement in student government. Although several members discussed institutional experiences that hindered their participation and blurred their specific roles in the SGA, overall the success of the SGAs are a direct result of the hard work that these students are navigating on a daily basis. Chapter 5 concludes this research study by discussing the findings, theoretical and practical implications, and recommendations for future research on the topic of student governance.

CHAPTER 5 - OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Research has shown that integrating Student Government Associations in institutional decision-making processes at the college and university level has evolved over the years (McGrath, 1970; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; May, 2010; Planas, Soler, Fullana, Pallisera, & Vila 2011). This involvement has evolved from deep-rooted commitment (i.e., fiscal responsibility, course selection, faculty and staff hiring) to solely providing budgetary support to other student organizations on campus and granting scholarships to deserving students. Although limited research exists on this topic, it is evident, through my interactions, that history is bound to repeat itself as students are demanding a more active role in institutional decision making.

For this study, I interviewed five undergraduate SGA members at UNLV, five undergraduate members at CSN, and two staff members who support the SGAs between the two institutions. These students expressed a variety of experiences regarding their involvement in their respective SGA, some positive and some negative. The voices of staff members provided valuable insight into the internal operations of the SGA and the interaction between the administration of the institution and SGA members. While some of their remarks were specific to their respective SGA, several comments could speak to the broader context regarding student involvement, mentoring and faculty/staff/student relationships. While expanding on these points, I discuss findings, theoretical and practical implications, and recommendations for future research in the following sections.

Discussion of Findings

The guiding questions for this study set the tone for the interview protocol and the overall framework for field notes. The research questions posed in this study address institutional experiences and perception regarding the roles and responsibilities of SGA members, staff and the administration of institutions.

Research Question 1

What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision-making processes?

This research question was designed to gather information regarding institutional experiences that may speak to the level of engagement by SGA members. Reflecting on the literature regarding the absence of student voice in critical conversations regarding institutional governance (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; McGrath 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige & Riley 1977; Golden & Schwartz, 1994; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999; May, 2010; Hendrickson et. al., 2013), this question sought to explore whether this is still a practice in higher education. Responses to this question were both positive and negative across both institutions. Although each SGA member shared his/her personal experiences, commonalities were revealed among several responses within each institution.

Both SGA members discussed having access to administrators on campus as a positive experience and mentioned several initiatives where the administration sought out the opinions of the SGA. However, a particular incident was mentioned (regarding the aftermath of the October 1st event) in which students were not consulted. Other things that encouraged students to participate in the SGA were related to the overall desire to be more involved and implement

change on the campus. The passion of these students was magnified when discussing their roles with the SGA, and it is evident that the majority of them were satisfied in their decision to join.

However, SGA members at UNLV described the power dynamics that exist within the SGA as a hindrance. This hindrance stemmed from being privy to specific information to make better informed decisions for the organization or their constituents. Many students stated that only the president and chief of staff are privy to information that could affect their constituents and although most information is passed down, some information is not disseminated in a timely fashion. A few students at CSN discussed the limited access to administrators being a problem when seeking permission, or various reports needed to execute multiple tasks. Others discussed having a great relationship with administrators at CSN. Those students mentioned how administrators reached out to ASCSN to gather their opinions regarding a tuition increase in the nursing program and inviting them to sit on various ad hoc committees. However, it is evident that students were disheartened by the lack of consistency and communication within the SGA and among multiple administrators. It was also mentioned, by students at both institutions, that administration could use training on working with the millennial students. Many students felt as if administrators believe that students should be seen and not heard. This particular thinking among administrators is similar to the literature which states that students may be special interest pleaders or cannot be unbiased (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998).

Members at UNLV discussed the hierarchy and bureaucracy that exists within CSUN as a hindrance to moving projects or initiatives forward. This fact is consistent with Benezet (1981) who suggests that the hierarchical structures that exist within the institutions have the potential to hinder participation in campus governance. It was clear that some students felt the organizational structure was a hindrance for prospective or new SGA members. Along this line, several

members offered their ideas for restructuring the organization consisting of dismantling various positions to make communication easier and eliminate the power dynamics that currently exist.

As an outsider, the organizational structure of CSUN at UNLV was quite complex. It was clear that its model was a direct replica of our national model for government. However, while structured, ASCSN at CSN offered a more relaxed structure that was easier to navigate for students and an outsider such as myself. So, many students mentioned strengthening the marketing department of CSUN to ensure all students know what CSUN is doing on behalf of students. Reevaluating marketing efforts would increase exposure to CSUN and its current activities.

Another experience mentioned pertains to their colleges. SGA members at UNLV discussed having a superficial relationship with their respective colleges and having no input on faculty or staff hiring at the university level and the college level. Many members discussed being aware of the initiatives of their respective college and how they could impact students but were mostly left out of decision making. This is contradictory to the literature that suggests students were given autonomy over several areas at their institutions by administrators (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968; Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; Baldrige 1970; McGrath, 1970; Morison, 1970; Baldrige & Riley, 1977; May, 2010).

Concerning being adequately prepared for their position, SGA members and staff at UNLV and CSN both discussed the lack of mentoring and training that takes place to assist them in becoming more effective leaders as a potential barrier to their success. SGA members discussed the lack of leadership training and mentioned that the current sessions offered are ineffective in helping them attain the skills needed to be successful in their position. This is

consistent with the literature addressing the importance of training and professional development required to effectively participate in institutional governance (Lizzo & Wilson, 2009).

Although the institutional type and governance models were vastly different, they were only a factor in the overall structure of the SGA and did not appear to be a factor when discussing training and mentoring programs for students and staff. However, they seem to be an indirect factor in organizational behavior and operating procedures.

Research Question 2

How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in the decision-making process at their institution?

This research question was designed to understand how SGA members perceive their roles in campus governance. The literature suggests that students have an innate desire to participate in governance and could in fact improve the institution (Vaccaro & Covert, 1969; McGrath, 1970; Morison, 1970; Lee, 1987; Golden & Schwartz, 1994; Lizzo & Wilson, 1999; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999; Hines 2000; Rodriguez & Villarreal, 2012). This question requires students to reflect on their perception of their role in institutional governance, onboarding experience, mentoring and training, as well as communication efforts regarding SGA business matters. Responses to this question addressed several challenges relating to the effectiveness of the SGA and how role and duties were communicated to members of the SGA.

Consistent with the literature, all students across both sites understand their overall role of advocating for student concerns and serving as a liaison between administration and the student body. Students also understand their roles of providing funding to student organizations for various events and disseminating various scholarships for deserving students. However, students at UNLV expressed frustration with the administration when trying to get projects and

initiatives implemented, for example, additional security and increased lighting on the "dark side" of campus.

Students also expressed frustration when seeking financial assistance for efforts and projects from the administration at UNLV, highlighting the discrepancy in fiscal ownership of the projects. This is contradictory to what the literature says on governance and freedom. In this instance, role conflict emerges due to the ambiguity that exists because roles are not clearly defined. Safety of students, including installing security lighting, should be the responsibility of the administration.

From conversations with students and staff at CSN, their perception varied regarding their voice making a difference in institutional decision making. The advisor mentioned that although administration comes to their meetings and presents information for their opinion, students feel that ultimately their voice does not matter and no matter how hard they push back on a particular initiative, it will get passed or implemented anyway.

Although participant responses varied by SGA and institution, several common themes across SGAs and institutions were noted. All members recognized the lack of mentoring and training in their onboarding process when they assumed their role in the SGA. The lack of preparation proved to be a challenge for students when navigating the multifaceted organizations. When probed about the types of training they would like, many of them mentioned training about being an effective leader and how to effectively communicate with others. While the lack of training was evident at the student level, the advisors for the SGAs spoke about the lack of professional development and training for them in their roles. Although they are expected to bring experience to their positions, both spoke to the need for continual professional development to aid in their effectiveness in their roles.

In addition to the lack of training for students and staff working with the SGA, most students and faculty interviewed discussed the organizational structure of the SGA being cumbersome. CSUN students spoke to the bureaucracy that exists within the SGA and how the intricate structure sometimes interferes with communication and implementation efforts. In that manner, many of them offered suggestions on how the organizations should be restructured. They suggested that by dismantling various positions, communication efforts would increase and power dynamics would lessen. They also indicated that compensation for different positions should be increased to lessen the need for additional outside work for students. One CSUN suggested that each area have a marketing director and that several divisions within CSUN be collapsed to increase effectiveness. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one ASCSN student suggested that compensation for several positions should be eliminated.

Both students in CSUN and ASCSN mentioned that they would like to be consulted on various institutional decisions related to faculty hiring and various financial decisions put forth by the institution. The most fascinating finding in this study pertains to the absence of SGA members on faculty hiring committees or the lack of SGA voice in fiscal decisions throughout both institutions. It was only in the area of curriculum and instruction that students at both institutions were satisfied with their limited interaction. Table 3 illustrates the current practices of SGAs in both institutions and their desired outcomes.

Table 3: Summary of current practices versus desired outcomes

Institution	Current Practices	Desired Outcomes
CSN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SGA members are unsure of the value of their opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration to show, through actions, that SGA members voices matter
UNLV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding all projects pertaining to students • Complex organizational structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assistance from UNLV administration for projects specifically relating to safety • Restructuring to flatten the organization and enhance lines of communication
Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Code of Conduct and Robert Rules of Order training • Only consulted on superficial student issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like extensive and comprehensive training on developing leadership skills, effective communication, and basic training on conducting effective meetings • Would like to be consulted on various institutional decisions related to faculty hiring and various financial decisions

Although the literature on student governance is limited and outdated, the findings of this study mimic those found in the literature that suggests power and authority, the desire to participate in campus governance, and the importance of training and development are common factors in students' experiences in student governance.

Implications for Theory

Although Role Theory is a social psychology theory utilized most often in business management (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Levinson, 1965; Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970; Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981), it proved particularly helpful in examining organizational behavior and

relationships. Although this theory is primarily used in quantitative studies to measure various concepts, for this study, role ambiguity and conflict were explored. Role ambiguity refers to “the degree to which clear information is lacking regarding the expectations associated with a role and methods for fulfilling known role expectations and/or the consequences of role performance” (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Levinson, 1965; Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). Role conflict is defined as “incongruity of the expectations associated with a role” (Sell et. Al., 1981, p. 44; see also Biddle, 1968; Bess & Dee, 2008). Both concepts were helpful to explore the perceptions of SGA members as it relates to their roles and duties of their respective SGA.

Throughout the study, students in both SGAs were unsure of their roles in multiple aspects of institutional decision making. Consistent with the literature, Bess and Dee (2008) discuss the concept of perceptual ambiguity where ambiguity resides within an individual’s perception of their role as well as objective ambiguity referring to how the duties are disseminated to the person. Both ambiguities arose during this study as SGA members described the expectations of their roles versus what was communicated to them. Perhaps this ambiguity occurred due to the lack of on-the-job training or mentoring desired by several SGA members. It is important to note that role conflict and ambiguity are not mutually exclusive. If one is present in an organization, the other is bound to occur as well. While several were disheartened regarding their voice in major institutional decisions, some were unbothered by the lack of participating on faculty hiring committees or any fiscal related committees.

Several instances of conflict emerged when students expressed being unsure of who is fiscally responsible for specific initiatives, i.e., security cameras and increased lighting. This lack of clarity proved to be a direct result of role ambiguity. Many mentioned that matters concerning the institution and the upkeep of structural property should fall under the privy of administration,

while a few, including some administrators, believed that it fell under the SGA. This situation proved to be an instance where delineation of responsibilities was unclear and thus resulted in projects and initiatives not being implemented or adequately funded.

Also, role conflict emerged when students in the SGA believed in the need for more transparency in the fiscal operations of the institutions. Many students expressed frustration regarding being in the dark regarding how these institutions are spending their money. Internally, among members, there were several instances of role conflict. However, this particular conflict seems to emerge due to the hierarchy and bureaucracy that exist within the organizations. Both concepts are contradictory to what the literature says about the roles of SGA members.

Additionally, Chickering's Seven Vectors of Identity Development offered insight into understanding the development of these students and if they were equipped to participate in the intricate process of campus governance. Although this model was initially introduced as a model for adolescent development, it has been helpful in various studies to examine the development of college-aged students. The four vectors used in this study were: developing competence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing purpose, and developing integrity. This study found that with proper training and mentoring, these students exhibited innate skills needed to participate in this process. Faculty advisors not only expressed the need for continued development of student leaders to enhance the professional and personal skills required to be effective leaders but requested continual training for themselves as well. This study demonstrated that students have the desire to participate in institutional governance and have the foundation needed to make critical decisions. As with any new skill, it merely needs to be nurtured and developed which the literature validates.

This study suggests that clearly defined roles for SGAs and proper training, mentoring, and professional development for SGA members and advisors will help ensure success and higher chances of integration.

Implications for Practice

Findings in this study suggest the need for comprehensive training and professional development workshops for all vested parties, students, staff, and administrators to increase student integration in institutional governance processes. These trainings should be designed to provide students with techniques to enhance their leadership and organizational skills. Some sample topics for this type of training can consist of a discussion regarding effective communication strategies, conflict resolution tips, and techniques, how to run an effective and productive meeting, etc. The workshops for administrators and advisors should be centered on understanding student leaders and being a partner to help them lead effectively. Various events in society regarding social injustices, campus violence have encouraged students to be more involved, more politically literate, and assume leadership roles in organizations. As a result, students have become more outspoken where rules and regulations of the past are no longer useful. This notion is aligned with Baldrige and Riley (1977) that termed student governance as a political activity stimulated by motives and behaviors that are typical of other kinds of political interest groups working to achieve access, recognition, and efficacy in matters of policy formulation and governance (p. 240).

The literature suggests that one of the reasons why students should not participate in campus governance is because they “lack the professional abilities, knowledge, and skills needed to provide input in various issues within an institution” (McGrath, 1970). While this may be true on many levels, mentoring students can mediate these problems. Mentoring workshops should be

designed that help students and staff understand the intricate nature of mentoring. Workshops should be developed to help all vested parties understand how to mentor to students regardless of age, race, gender, culture, or sexual identities. These workshops will help students and staff understand the value of shared communication, reflection, and mentoring across generations.

Another aspect to consider is the aptitude and fit of the staff/faculty advisor for the SGA. After speaking with members from both SGAs, it was evident that the mentorship and guidance that is offered by their advisor is invaluable to their success. Along this avenue, institutions should consider the roles of these advisors in the operations of the SGA. While I am a proponent of students having power and authority in participating in the campus governance process, this dissertation also highlighted the lack of mentorship and training to handle this amount of power.

Several students in both SGAs expressed the desire to restructure their respective organization. As referenced in Chapter 2, Golden and Schwartz (1994) identified several models of student government that could be beneficial if the restructuring was considered. Minimizing reporting structures could help with the communication problems that exist within CSUN. “Flattening the organization” is a term mentioned by a student at UNLV as a way to restructure the organization. Although this a term commonly used in business, many of the problems with both institutions could be rectified by flattening the organization. According to Wulf, “Flattening is supposed to help push decisions downward to enhance customer and market responsiveness and improve accountability and morale” (2012). Eliminating excess positions may improve communication and processes. The various positions that exist within CSUN proved to be a hindrance to advancing organizational goals. In addition to revisiting the organizational structure, the executive board of the SGAs should consider changing the term limits of members

to allow for successional planning and mentoring of incoming members. Currently, all members serve for one year which means all positions are open to the public. Students may choose to run for a second term but most of them do not. The turnover in these positions leads to ineffective programming and the inability to do effective longitudinal planning.

Another recommendation would be to conduct an annual evaluation and assessment of the SGA. An annual or bi-annual assessment will help direct goals for the upcoming year and provide tangible areas of strengths and those in need of improvement. A guide is provided in Appendix G that will aid organizations in this endeavor. This guide should accompany any current assessment or evaluation checklist that currently exists within the organization.

The suggestions for improvement above are all doable and require minimal financial backing from the institutions. Perhaps the costliest recommendation listed is soliciting an unbiased party to conduct an assessment or evaluation of the SGA. Implementing these ideas (trainings, mentoring workshops, and restructuring the SGAs) will minimize role ambiguity and conflict and ensure students are prepared for their roles.

Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Research

Historical research has highlighted the decline of student involvement over the years. This decline leads one to question the process and wonder why this drastic change has occurred. This dissertation sought to help faculty and staff understand the importance of student integration in campus governance processes and to help inform future practice and research for all parties. Throughout this study, questions were raised regarding mentoring, the maturity of student leaders, as well as the relationship between students and administrators at various institutional types. Furthermore, this study explored student experiences and training to effectively and

efficiently carry out the duties assigned to them and to strengthen their working relationships among faculty and staff.

As a future study, utilizing the theoretical framework identified in this study can examine training materials and the onboarding process for new SGA members, existing mentoring programs, and how best to strengthen the relationship between faculty, staff, and students. For example, a quantitative research design could offer a longitudinal analysis of the effectiveness of various institutional initiatives outlining those mentioned above. Further, alternative qualitative research methods could mirror a telling case study design to broaden the scope of this study to include additional institutional types and institutions located in various regions throughout the United States.

Without proper training and mentoring these students, institutions are doing a disservice to them. I have learned that most learning and growing in college occurs outside of the classroom and thus leads to a more holistic education. If these students are showing an interest in being an advocate for their classmates and a vested interest in how the institution operates, the institution must serve them in this capacity. Even though UNLV boasts a more intricate and professional structure for their SGA, the institution is not as supportive or responsive to the needs of its student leaders. On the other hand, CSN, where students are only there two or three years, appears more attentive to student needs and offers more transparency in their governance processes.

As society evolves and students become more politically involved in matters that directly impact them, institutions across the United States could potentially see a spike in student involvement. Strong mentoring and training for current and future student leaders need to be implemented at institutions and ingrained in the onboarding process of these students. Once a

powerful voice in institutional decision making and governance processes, students have become a symbolic fixture widely removed from any substantial decision making at the institutional level. “My Voice Matters” is a telling case study designed to offer an inside look at SGAs and offer recommendations for colleges and universities to strengthen student/staff relationships in efforts to include their most important stakeholder in campus decision making. The days of ignoring our most important stakeholder in higher education are gone, we must embrace the complexities of these students and have them at the table during important decision making because all vested parties benefit from their involvement.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide and Protocol - Students

Purpose

To explore how undergraduate students participate in campus governance through Student Government Associations (SGAs) across various institutional types.

Definitions

- **Institutional Governance:** Governance refers to the systemic nature of how operations are conducted within the institution (AGB Report, 1968); *see also* [the process] with which scholars, students, teachers, administrators and trustees associated together in a college or in a university establish and carry out rules and regulations that minimize conflict, facilitate their collaboration, and preserve essential individual freedom” (Corson, 1960, pp. 12-13).
- **Institutional Type:** The classification structure of colleges and universities (Indiana University, 2015).
- **Student Government:** A tool used to recruit new students, retain existing students, and improve student and alumni involvement. A strong, effective, efficient, and competent student voice that is critical to the overall health of any higher-education institution (American Student Government Association, 2016).

Demographic Information

1. Gender Identity
2. Ethnicity
3. Year in School (Student)
 - a. How long have you been at this school?
4. Current major
5. Anticipated Graduation Date

Themes addressed in interview questions: *Institutional activities; Student Governance; Perceptions of inclusion; Faculty/Staff interactions; Personal and/or professional development; University policies and procedures*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
<p>1.) What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision making processes?</p>	<p>1.) Describe your experience with the SGA at your school.</p> <p>2.) Are you satisfied with the current SGA at your school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If not, and you were asked to reorganize it, how would you do that?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Would you change some of the policies behind the operation of the SGA? If so, what would those be? 3.) In your opinion, does the administration value the voice of the SGA? Please explain your thoughts. 4.) Do you feel that your institution does a good job in integrating students in the decision making process? Why or why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are some recommendations that you have to improve this process? 5.) Describe your level of interaction with faculty/staff on your campus. 6.) Describe your relationship with the SGA faculty advisor. 7.) Have you received any training or professional development to help facilitate your participation in the campus decision making processes? 8.) Are you aware of policy changes that occur within your institution? 9.) Does administration seek out the opinions and comments of students regarding policy changes? 10.) What are some policies that should be revised to include input from students? 11.) What are some current policies that you would have liked to provide input on?
<p>1.) How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in the decision-making processes at their institution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) What activities do you currently participate in at your school outside of the SGA? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is your position within that/those organizations? b. Are there any activities that you plan to participate in at the start of the new school year? 2.) In your opinion, what is the role of the Student Government Association (SGA)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the top 3 things that an effective SGA does or should be doing? 3.) Do you believe the general student body value the SGA on campus? If so, how so? If not, why not?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">4.) How do you perceive the roles of SGAs in campus governance processes?5.) Do you feel as if your ideas or opinions are reflected in institutional policies? If not, please explain.6.) How do you perceive your role in campus governance at your institution?7.) Do you have a mentor?8.) Overall, do you believe that students should have a voice in deciding institutional policies and procedures?<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. If yes, how do you think students should be included in such a process? Are there areas within the institution that students should not be included in this process?
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Conclusion

Anything else we should know about you and your connection to [institution]?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide and Protocol - Administrators

Purpose

To explore how undergraduate students participate in campus governance through Student Government Associations (SGAs) across various institutional types.

Definitions

- **Institutional Governance:** Governance refers to the systemic nature of how operations are conducted within the institution (AGB Report, 1968); *see also* [the process] with which scholars, students, teachers, administrators and trustees associated together in a college or in a university establish and carry out rules and regulations that minimize conflict, facilitate their collaboration, and preserve essential individual freedom” (Corson, 1960, pp. 12-13).
- **Institutional Type:** The classification structure of colleges and universities (CCIHE-IU, 2015).
- **Student Government:** A tool used to recruit new students, retain existing students, and improve student and alumni involvement. A strong, effective, efficient, and competent student voice that is critical to the overall health of any higher-education institution (American Student Government Association, 2016).

Demographic Information

1. Gender Identity
2. Ethnicity
3. Title
4. Rank (Faculty), Years (Staff)
 - a. How long have you been at this school?
5. Current Unit/Department

Themes addressed in interview questions: *Institutional activities; Student Governance; Perceptions of inclusion; Faculty/Staff interactions; Personal and/or professional development; University policies and procedures*

Research Questions	Interview Questions
<p>1.) What institutional experiences (if any) encourage or hinder SGA undergraduate student members from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision making processes?</p>	<p>1.) Describe your experience with the SGA at your school.</p> <p>2.) Are you satisfied with the current SGA at your school?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If not, and you were asked to reorganize it, how would you do that?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Would you change some of the policies behind the operation of the SGA? If so, what would those be? 3.) In your opinion, does the administration value the voice of the SGA? Please explain your thoughts. 4.) Do you feel that your institution does a good job in integrating students in the decision making process? Why or why not? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are some recommendations that you have to improve this process? 5.) Describe your level of interaction with students on your campus. 6.) Have you received any training or professional development to help integrate students in the campus decision making processes? 7.) What issues encourage SGAs from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision making processes? 8.) What issues hinder SGAs from participating in the informal or formal institutional decision making processes? 9.) Does administration seek out the opinions and comments of students regarding policy changes? 10.) What are some policies that should be revised to include input from students? 11.) Do you believe that the institutional type of the college or university influence how SGAs participate in informal or formal institutional governance? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How so? 12.) What is the most fulfilling aspect of interacting with students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. From your interactions with students, what recommendations do you have for student development on your campus? 13.) How does [institution] convey a commitment to including students in the decision making processes?
<p>2.) How do undergraduate student members of SGAs perceive their role in</p>	<p>1.) What activities do you currently oversee at your school outside of the SGA?</p>

<p>the decision-making processes at their institution?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prior years? In the future? 2.) In your opinion, what is the role of the Student Government Association (SGA)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the top 3 things that an effective SGA does or should be doing? 3.) Do you believe the general student body value the SGA on campus? If so, how so? If not, why not? 4.) How do you perceive the roles of SGAs in campus governance processes? 5.) Do you feel as if the ideas or opinions of students are reflected in institutional policies? If not, please explain. 6.) How do you perceive the role of students in campus governance at your institution? 7.) Overall, do you believe that students should have a voice in deciding institutional policies and procedures? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, how do you think students should be included in such a process? Are there areas within the institution that students should not be included in this process?
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Conclusion

Anything else we should know about you and your connection to [institution]?

APPENDIX C

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)- Mission & Vision Statement

By 2025, UNLV will be recognized as a top tier public university in research, education, and community impact. UNLV's diverse faculty, students, staff, and alumni promote community well-being and individual achievement through education, research, scholarship, creative activities, and clinical services. We stimulate economic development and diversification, foster a climate of innovation, promote health, and enrich the cultural vitality of the communities that we serve.

We will evaluate our success as a leading research university by our progress on these key measures:

- Impact of our research, scholarship, and creative activities.
- Student achievement of learning outcomes.
- Placement into preferred employment or post-graduate educational opportunities.
- Student, faculty, and staff diversity, including maintaining UNLV's Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status and Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status.
- Intellectual activity, patents, and entrepreneurial activity fostered by UNLV.
- Quality and impact of our clinical services.
- Alignment of our physical infrastructure and organizational effectiveness with our Top Tier mission.
- A deeper engagement of UNLV with Las Vegas and our region to ensure ongoing alignment with our diverse community needs and interests.
- Carnegie Classification criteria (research expenditures; doctoral degrees granted per year; number of non-faculty research staff, such as postdocs; and Carnegie Community Engagement status).

As a measure of overall university effectiveness and progress, UNLV will prepare, implement, and disseminate a progress card.

UNLV's Core Themes

The core themes of UNLV, the objectives, and their indicators of achievement express the mission of the university. The core themes describe in broad statements what UNLV plans to

accomplish and reflect the values that are shared by faculty and staff. Evaluation of the metrics associated with the indicators of achievement will demonstrate how effectively UNLV is carrying out its mission.

- Core Theme 1: Advance Student Achievement
- Core Theme 2: Promote Research, Scholarship, Creative Activity
- Core Theme 3: Create an Academic Health Center
- Core Theme 4: Foster Community Partnerships

APPENDIX D

College of Southern Nevada (CSN) - Mission & Vision Statement

Mission Statement

CSN creates opportunities and enriches lives with inclusive learning and working environments that support diversity and student success. The College fosters economic development, civic engagement, and cultural and scientific literacy, while helping students achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.

Vision Statement

CSN is recognized as a leader among community colleges in fostering student success.

CSN is committed to:

- *Exceptional Learning Environments*, which integrate career and liberal arts education, to shape well-rounded, engaged citizens, employees, and community leaders.
- *Developing Solution-Oriented Strategies* to help students overcome barriers to educational access and success.
- *A Culture of Accountability* in which we balance data-informed decision making with flexibility and responsiveness to stakeholders, individuals, and events.
- *A Collegial Work Environment* that makes CSN the "employer of choice" for an exceptional workforce that is engaged in and accountable for the quality of CSN learning environment, and that benefits from excellent support, growth opportunities, and competitive total compensation packages.
- *Quality Community Partnerships* that provide resources and educational opportunities to develop a skilled workforce.
- *Cultural and Academic Initiatives* that promote the advancement and appreciation of the arts, sciences, and humanities, contributing to the richness of our multicultural community.

Values Statement

CSN values the following:

Lifelong Learning: CSN] values a broad-based education because a diverse foundation of knowledge empowers creative thinking, problem solving, and innovation.

Excellence: CSN understands that achieving and surpassing our goals requires care, commitment, and quality in teaching, learning, scholarship, service, and administration.

Integrity: CSN places fairness, honesty, transparency, and trust at the center of all policies and operations.

Inclusion: CSN embraces diversity because it heals social division and injustice, and promotes creativity, growth, and critical thinking through the integration of many different perspectives.

Academic Freedom: CSN values freedom of thought and speech because open minds and uninhibited discussions are fundamental to teaching, learning, and responsible civic engagement.

Connectedness: CSN builds a collective identity through shared governance, effective communication and collaboration among students, faculty, staff, and community members.

APPENDIX E

CSUN Student Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Year	Major	Role in SGA	Length in SGA
J.C.	African American	Female	5th year Senior	Urban Studies	Senator	1 year
A.J.	White	Male	Senior	Comprehensive Kinesiology and Nutrition	Senator	1 year
D.B.	Filipino	Cis Female	Senior	Public Health	CSUN Administration	1 year
L.N.	African American	Female	Junior	Human Services	CSUN Administration	Since June 2017
K.C.	White	Male	Administrator	N/A	Administrator	Since July 2017

APPENDIX F

ASCSN Student Participants

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender	Year in School	Major	Role in SGA	Length in SGA
L.H.	Vietnamese and American	Male	Junior status	Political Science	Senator	1 year
B.V.	African American	Female	Junior status	Psychology and Philosophy (Emphasis in Law)	Senator	1st semester (newly elected)
B.H.	Israeli and Filipino	Female	Sophomore	N/A	Senator	2 years
D.I.	Hispanic, prominently White	Female	Sophomore	N/A	Senator	1 year
A.B.	African American	Male	Administrator	N/A	Administrator	1 year

APPENDIX G

Self-Assessment and Evaluation Guide for Student Government Associations

Adapted from The Ohio State University Student Organization Success Framework

This guide is broken down by seven pertinent areas in assessing the effectiveness of a Student Government Association (SGA). Using this self-assessment will allow organizations to determine their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. This guide should accompany any operational manual(s) that currently exist within the organization.

1. **Mission, Vision and Goals** – The mission, vision and goals of the SGA is clear to its members and those of the campus community.

Points to consider

- Review of the organization’s mission, vision and goals are discussed on an annual basis
- Leaders and members are able to articulate the organization’s mission, vision and goals to the outside community
- Organizational goals are set on an annual basis with members and advisor(s)
- Organizational goals are regularly reviewed and revised as needed
- Organizational programming efforts are centered on its mission, vision and goals

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization is doing an exceptional job	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some efforts in this area are successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very few things are being done in this area

2. **Organizational Structure and Membership** – The SGAs organizational structure is one that has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, seeks out a diverse membership, and actively collaborates with internal and external entities for programming.

Points to consider

- Leaders and members are able to clearly articulate their roles and responsibilities
- Roles and responsibilities of ad hoc committees are clearly defined
- Organization has an active and aggressive recruitment and retention plan for its members
- The norms and values of the organization helps supports its programming
- Organization conducts an annual needs assessment and evaluation of events and programming efforts

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some efforts in this area are successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few things are being done in this area

3. **Communication Infrastructure** – Leaders and members of the SGA communicate effectively and efficiently with its counterparts in the SGA and the campus community.

Points to consider

- Leadership within the organization regularly seeks out feedback from members and the campus community regarding operations and programming efforts
- Organization has identified other institutions/organizations/groups to collaborate with for programming
- Organization maintains detailed records and documentation of all communication (including, but not limited to, written communication, event records, etc.)
- Meeting notes are regularly recorded and disseminated to the members and campus community in a timely fashion
- Organization brainstorms with other members of the campus community regarding the value of collaborating
- Advisor(s) opinions are solicited and utilized

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some efforts in this area are successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few things are being done in this area

4. **Fiscal Responsibilities and Budgeting** – The SGA is financially self-supporting with a well-developed budget that reflects the current and future priorities of the organization.

Points to consider

- Members are aware and active participants in setting or maintaining their organization’s budget
- Leaders in the organization do long-term planning for financial management
- Organization collaborates with the administration and other departments on campus to maximize their use of funds
- Treasurer is properly trained and participates in other workshops and/or training when available

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some efforts in this area are successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few things are being done in this area

5. **Professional Development and Training** – Members of the SGA are properly trained and equipped to be effective leaders within the organization and in the campus community.

Points to consider

- Leaders and members are strongly encouraged and/or mandated to participate in leadership development workshops and trainings
- Leaders and members are strongly encouraged and/or mandated to participate in cultural sensitivity workshops or training (if available)
- Student conduct training is mandatory for all leaders and members
- Leaders and members participate in retreats to strengthen leadership, organizational and communication skills
- Leaders and members are strongly encouraged and/or mandated to seek out either a peer or faculty mentor to help with leadership development

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some efforts in this area are successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few things are being done in this area

6. **Cultural Awareness and Appreciation** – The SGA intentionally cultivates an understanding of identity and difference and how it impacts the undergraduate experience.

Points to consider

- Organization actively works to comply with non-discrimination policies set forth by the organization’s constitution or bylaws and the institution in which it resides
- Organization dedicates meetings to educate leaders and members about differences and cross-cultural conversations
- Organization actively recruits members of different backgrounds
- Organization attends programs that educate members about differences

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some efforts in this area are successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few things are being done in this area

7. **Longitudinal Planning** – Organization has a plan in place for new leaders and members that protects historical knowledge and offers a smooth transition in leadership.

Points to consider

- Organization holds transition meetings between incoming and outgoing leaders in efforts to help facilitate a smooth transition
- Documents are archived properly to ensure new leaders and members are educated on historical trends, past activities and events and previous fiscal documents.
- Emerging leaders are proactively recruited by current leaders
- Mentoring is taking place between current and incoming leaders and members
- Advisor is actively engaged in the transition process between leaders and members
- Conversations between current and new leaders are centered on long-term planning for success. Including, but not limited to, goal setting, financial planning, and programming.
- Organization annually conducts an exit interview from outgoing leaders and members about their experience

Exceptional	Successful	Developing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization is doing an exceptional job in this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some efforts in this area are successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very few things are being done in this area

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