DISSERTATION

SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGE REVITALIZATION: A META-STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE TURNAROUND

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY RHONDA LYNN FISHER EAKER ENTITLED SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGE REVITALIZATION: A META-STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE TURNAROUND BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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While high profile colleges are becoming increasingly selective and garnering huge endowments, many lesser known small, private colleges are fighting for survival. A number of these colleges have experienced significant decline, but have rallied to meet the challenge and ultimately survived. Using a qualitative meta-study methodology, this research examined the revitalization process used by 45 small, private colleges.

Models were developed for both the state of decline and the process of revitalization. Decline is illustrated as a cyclical process. As enrollment and finances weaken, small colleges are forced to respond in ways that continue and even exacerbate the decline resulting in a series of on-going cycles.

The revitalization model demonstrates the process of breaking the cycles to reverse their momentum. It is not a linear process; instead it is a seemly haphazard mix of activities that impact finances and enrollment either directly or indirectly. Revitalization is often simply a matter of trying as many things as possible, as quickly as possible, until something works.

The revitalization process was unique to each college's situation but some useful observations did emerge. For instance, a breakdown of governance responsibilities and structures seems to have a more devastating effect on a small college than it might in a larger institution. A more involved Board of Trustees and the development of widely accepted communication and decision making structures were a key part of revitalization. These colleges also found that they had to broaden their constituencies and their

academic offerings. Cutting budgets, cutting programs, or narrowing their niche were not solutions for these colleges, at least not in isolation. The study results did not necessarily advocate trying to "be all things to all people", but these colleges did need to find ways to "be more things to more people". Finally, these colleges found that increasing enrollment was a function of the entire college, not just the admissions office. The admissions function was only successful when the college took steps to enhance program offerings, upgrade facilities, improve image and develop strategic partnerships.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated with love to my family. My husband, Randall, supported my dream of continuing my education even when it was not practical. He listened to me as I talked endlessly about my classes, and cooked dinner for me when I was unable to tear myself away from my work. My sons, Brandon and Justin, thought I was crazy for going to school when I did not have to, but managed to share the computer with me when I needed it. Finally, to my mom and dad, Glenn and Marvel Fisher, who encouraged me to go back to school even though it seemed late in life to do so. My dad has always dreamed that I would take the final step for my education. I am pleased to honor that dream.

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It is sir, as I have said, a small college, and yet there are those that love it . . .

Daniel Webster, 1818 (as qtd by Rudolf, 1965)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United States has an enviable history with a record of growth and distinction that few types of organizations can come close to equaling. The first colonial college, now Harvard University, can trace its roots back almost 400 years. The eight other colonial colleges, founded in the 17th and 18th centuries, have grown to be among the most elite colleges and universities in the country. Growth in the number of institutions of higher education and the number of college and university students has been continuous and almost uninterrupted. Higher education has evolved from a luxury for an elite few, to part of mainstream society sought by much of the population. Furthermore, the U.S. system of higher education is considered one of the best in the world.

And yet the literature reflects almost unbroken alarm and concern for the health of higher education. Private higher education in particular has regularly been considered troubled (Breneman, 1994). In the 1970s, some futurists predicted the failure of almost all private higher education in the United States (Cohen, 1998). Private liberal arts colleges, in particular, have been repeatedly labeled as endangered. Some liberal arts colleges have been driven by market forces to change their missions in order to survive. The resulting concern is that liberal arts colleges are being "fundamentally challenged and their continued viability seriously threatened" (Lang, 1999, p. 133). Furthermore, less selective private colleges struggle as they watch students compete fiercely for admission to elite colleges, while they cannot fill their classes. "At many institutions, it is difficult to find qualified students who want to enroll. Unlike Ivy League institutions and highly competitive public universities, most colleges do not have a surplus of desirable applicants" (Farrell, 2007, p. A33).

The segment of higher education that has often been the target of concern, and which this research addresses, is the traditional small, private, residential, four-year college. As a group they have survived, even thrived, for generations. At the same time, many are struggling and some have closed. These colleges have been described as hardy and resilient institutions with long histories of growth and adaptation. Conversely, they have been called an endangered, obsolete segment of higher education, teetering on the brink of disaster. Which description is valid? The fact is that both descriptions may be true, resulting in a paradox: small colleges as a group can be described as hardy, resilient and adaptable, but some individuals within the group are endangered and struggling for survival.

Problem Statement

Several decades ago, Astin and Lee (1972) introduced the term "invisible colleges." The term referred to private colleges defined by their very small size and limited or non-selectivity. At the time of their original study, 494 colleges fit the classification of invisibility and collectively accounted for 15% of all four year college enrollment. The title invisible was applied because, although there were a large number of them, individually they were relatively unknown and often not given much attention. Many of them were religiously affiliated, historically Black or women's institutions.

They were often found in very small towns disproportionately located in the Midwest and Southeast.

Many of these colleges were in trouble in 1972. "They are the least-known colleges nationally and many of them are fighting desperately for survival" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. xi). Some of them are still, or again, in trouble more than 35 years later. A handful of them close every year, others struggle year after year to maintain steady enrollment and endowments. Some are slowly fading, cutting programs, deferring maintenance, and watching enrollments drop. A seemingly minor event can push them over the edge from "just barely making it" to a state of decline.

There have also been success stories for these colleges. Faced with decline, some of the "invisible colleges" have undertaken a change process that has led to revitalization or turnaround, restoring them to a stronger condition. This revitalization might involve finding new leadership, refocusing the mission, engaging in intense fund raising, implementing and marketing new programs, or seeking new types of students.

A number of researchers have studied these colleges to learn from them and to understand the revitalization process. There have been at least 45 small colleges that have been the focus of revitalization case studies since 1980. From these case studies researchers have generated ideas and recommendations for other struggling schools to consider. However, most of the case studies have been an in-depth look at a single institution, occasionally two or three institutions. The recommendations, therefore, may have applicability, but limited generalizability.

In a few situations researchers have studied groups of schools. Chaffee (1984) took an in-depth look at the individual experiences of eight colleges that experienced revitalization in the 1970s. A "prescription for turnaround" was provided by Cowen (1993) who looked in depth at five schools, and performed cursory reviews of 11 others, to arrive at five specific recommendations for declining colleges. This project attempted to use the individual experiences of the colleges to uncover some collective guidance for declining colleges. A larger study was done in the form of a survey conducted of 51 private college presidents whose institutions experienced decline and revitalization during the 1970s (Hamlin & Hungerford, 1989). The output was a ranked list of factors that the college presidents felt were most instrumental for their college's revitalization. From these rankings some broad concepts emerged, but no detailed analysis of each individual college's experience was conducted.

What appears to be missing from the research is an in-depth, case by case analysis of the combined experiences of a large number of revitalized colleges designed to guide other small colleges through a change or revitalization process. Cowan's 1993 "prescription for turnaround" was the model and inspiration for this research, but the goal was to include a larger number of institutions by using all available existing, individual case studies.

Researcher's Perspective

The researcher's interest in this topic was the result of a personal experience at a small, troubled college. I was hired by the college as the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid. Available historical records showed enrollment had been declining consistently almost each year for at least 30 years. Since the admissions office had not been doing many of the "traditional" admissions office marketing activities, it seemed likely that there was potential for enrollment growth through the use of recruiting activities. In less than a year, I had changed my mind and concluded that the institution's enrollment problems could not be solved by a recruiting plan. Although I could not identify all of the issues at the time, I knew the institution itself was deeply flawed and troubled and that larger issues needed to be addressed.

Early in my doctoral studies I did some research for a paper that introduced me to an article by Ruth Cowen (1993) entitled *Prescription for small-college turnaround.* She analyzed 5 colleges in depth and did an overview of 11 others. One of her findings was that colleges often misdiagnose their problems as related to admissions or development, when in fact the problems go much deeper. She discussed issues of "clarity of purpose" and understanding the mission. Her conclusions rang true to my experience and provided me with a deeper understanding of what my college had been experiencing. However, I found myself wondering if a larger sample size would provide a better or more detailed understanding of the turnaround process. I began my search for a methodology that might accomplish this and discovered the *meta-study.* Cowen's idea for a prescription for turnaround along with the meta-study concept coalesced into conceptual basis for this dissertation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose was to create a model or prescription for turnaround for troubled colleges using the combined experiences of a large number of colleges that have successfully engaged in revitalization. A number of revitalized colleges have been the subject of in-depth case studies. This study analyzed these case studies to develop a model for change that can be used to better understand and implement small college revitalization.

The study design, qualitative meta-study, is the process of analyzing and synthesizing existing, available research with the goal of attaining a more complete understanding than could be achieved by looking at a single study in isolation. In this study, the individual case studies of revitalized colleges were the data which, when considered together, provided more generalizable knowledge than when reviewed individually.

Research Questions

The research questions generated from the meta-study design were written to generate commonalities in each college's experience and to use those commonalities to develop a revitalization model. The applicable case studies were analyzed individually and the resulting data integrated to answer the following research questions.

1. What variables for decline and for revitalization occur most frequently in an analysis of case studies of small, private colleges that have experienced decline and revitalization?
2. What patterns and themes emerge from analyses of the variables?
3. What model or strategic change process can be developed from this analysis that can guide small colleges that are in decline?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in a specific way for this study. These definitions can help the reader better understand their use in the context of this research.

Decline – Each college studied was facing challenges and therefore was labeled as "in decline". Each primary study's author(s) made the determination of the state of decline separately so the indicators of decline differ by school. Most often the indicators included factors such as decreased enrollment and endowment, faculty layoffs, salary freezes, revenue declines, or net operating loses. Regardless of the specifics, the colleges felt a sense of urgency to take action to correct a deficiency.

Invisible colleges – This term is credited to Astin and Lee (1972) to refer to small, private, non-selective colleges. Most of the colleges in this study would probably qualify as invisible although the criteria of the study did not require it.

Primary author – A researcher who conducted and published an article or study that was included as part of the data for this meta-study.

Primary study – A case study of a college that was included as part of the data for this meta-study.

Qualitative Meta-Study – The analysis and synthesis of all available and relevant qualitative research on a particular subject with the goal of developing or expanding theory to attain a more complete understanding of the topic than can be achieved by examining a single study in isolation.

Revitalization – The process of moving from a state of decline to a stronger condition. Like the term decline, there were no standard criteria for a revitalized college. The determination that a college was "revitalized" was a judgment on the part of the primary author.

Turnaround – This term is a synonym for revitalization.

Small, private colleges – The focus of this study was on small, private colleges in the United States. The following parameters were established as a definition of small, private colleges:

- Private, non-profit
- Post secondary, four year institutions
- Enrollment of 5,000 or less at the time of the primary study
- Either liberal arts or comprehensive
- More than 50% undergraduate
- Historically traditional, residential, campus-based programs

Viability - There have been attempts to measure the concept of viability in higher education, but there is no standard definition. This research will use the term to refer to colleges that are not in imminent danger of closing and are on a generally stable or upward trend in the obvious areas of enrollment, endowment and operating revenue.

Delimitations

One of the advantages of a meta-study is that it produces more generalizable results than most other qualitative methodologies. This study was based on the experiences of numerous small colleges making it more representative of small college experiences than any of the primary studies individually.

However, a meta-study is limited by the available primary research. The colleges in this study were the ones that primary researchers chose as the basis for a case study. Although this resulted in a large number of colleges, it by no means guarantees the colleges are as representative or diverse as a randomized sample.

Furthermore, many small colleges have long and unique histories. No single model or theory can account for every possible scenario or situation that a college may face. The best a study of this nature can provide is a broad understanding based on the experiences of a large group of similar institutions.

Significance of the Study

Although the growth of higher education in the United States remains strong overall; some colleges, particularly the small, less selective, private colleges, struggle for survival. These "invisible colleges" are little known and rarely discussed. Of the extensive research and literature in the field of higher education, only a small amount of it focuses specifically on these colleges. Much of what does exist was published in the 1970s and 1980s when college enrollments were predicted to decline overall and concern for higher education was high. There has been less research or publication focusing on small, private colleges in recent years (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p.9).

Some of these colleges are in a fight for life. Others have successfully faced challenges and have important stories to tell. There is much to learn from these success stories that can benefit those colleges that are struggling, but it is unlikely that a typical college leader will read the stories of each of these schools and synthesize their experiences into a useful format. The value of this meta-study is that it gathered the lessons learned from successful revitalization stories and put them into a useable and more generalizable format.

Small colleges have something to offer and they add an important element of diversity to American higher education. Without them, higher education would be weaker. A model for change that can guide small colleges to viability is an important step in helping to preserve them.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education in the United States faces a paradox. Despite the growth in demand for a college or university education, there is a segment of small, private colleges that are unable to enroll as many students as they are able to accommodate. In fact, many of them barely enroll enough students to survive. This literature review provides some insight into the situation faced by these small colleges. It will review their current condition, consider what challenges they are facing, contemplate if they are worth saving, and if so, how to help those that are struggling. A brief overview of the history of U.S. higher education provides an important background for this discussion.

A Brief History

Higher education emerged very early in the history of the American colonies and many of the earliest colleges have shown remarkable persistence. The nine colonial colleges founded between 1636 and 1769 are flourishing and have names that are easily recognized: Harvard University, College of William and Mary, Yale University, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, Columbia University, Brown University, Rutgers University, and Dartmouth College. Many other currently thriving institutions of higher education can trace their histories back to the 18^{th} century. In the early years these universities were small colleges devoted to a liberal and classical education. They emphasized clerical training, teaching and character building in a residential environment. It is from these early roots that our current system of small, mainly liberal arts colleges evolved (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p. 19).

As the country spread westward, new colleges followed. In his classification of the history of higher education, Cohen (1998) labels 1790-1869 as the era of *The Diffusion of Small Colleges in the Emergent Nation.* A college was seen as a way to legitimize a new settlement and due to the lack of regulation they were easy to establish (Cohen, 1998, p. 56-57). While many colleges came and went, 240 institutions survive from this period.

As the country matured, public institutions began to emerge. The passage of the Morrill Act at the end of the Civil War established land grant colleges. Early land grant colleges offered agricultural and mechanical studies, a more practical education than the clerical training of the liberal arts colleges. Eddy states that traditional colleges were not concerned about these new rivals until the Second Morrill Act in 1890 provided more federal support for the land grant colleges. At that point some small colleges, already struggling for students, became concerned (Hawkins, 1999).

Nevertheless, higher education continued to grow. The 30 years after WWII have been called the "golden age" of higher education with enrollment, finances, and the number of institutions all expanding (Breneman, 1994, p. 23; Cheit, 1973; Cohen, 1998, p. 175). Higher education was no longer for the elite and wealthy, but for the masses; it was increasingly seen as an entry to a secure, upper-middle class future. The golden age ended when the baby boom enrollment peaked in the 1970s. At the same time inflation and a stagnant economy curtailed spending. The result was an industry-wide focus on retrenchment. The outlook for private colleges was considered especially grim. The percentage of students attending private colleges had been consistently dropping as the public sector became stronger. As the golden age ended, some analysts concluded this could also be the end for private college education (Cohen, 1998, p. 301-302).

It was not the end. Predictions of the demise of small, private colleges have occurred at many points in history; nevertheless, they continue to endure. A number of elite and prosperous small colleges have become highly sought after and are thriving. Still, small, private colleges as a group have not regained their former status and there is ongoing concern for their well being.

Defining Small Private Colleges

There is much diversity in higher education and this diversity is most pronounced among small, private colleges. They can be religious or secular, co-ed or single gender, historically ethnic, selective or open, prosperous or poor, liberal arts or comprehensive. Furthermore, they can continually reinvent themselves to meet changing needs and circumstances. The result of this diversity is that there is no single definition of small, private colleges and the literature and research used for this review may not all refer to the same group of colleges. In addition, some of the research or literature discussed in this review may relate to only a particular subset of small colleges. However, some of the following classification systems will provide some insight into the colleges targeted by this research.

The Carnegie Foundation

One of the best known and most widely used classification systems for colleges comes from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2006a). Their current structure is actually a series of classifications. The Basic Classification uses the percentage of degrees awarded at each level as the main criterion.

- Associate's Colleges
- Baccalaureate Colleges
- Master's Colleges and Universities
- Doctorate-granting Universities
- Special Focus Institutions
- Tribal Colleges.

Within these categories, there are further breakdowns. Baccalaureate Colleges include subcategories based on the type of majors offered.

- Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences
- Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields
- Bac/Assoc: Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges

These categories reflect a recent update to the Basic Classification. The previous terminology included two subgroups for Baccalaureate Colleges: Liberal Arts I (LAI) and Liberal Arts II (LAII). Liberal Arts I colleges were distinguished by selective enrollment. Liberal Arts II were less selective in enrollment and also included colleges that were not strictly liberal arts, but were too small to be classified as comprehensive colleges. The LAI and LAII terminology is still found often in the literature.

Most of the colleges for this meta-study would fall under the Baccalaureate College classification, often, but not necessarily in the Arts & Sciences. Under the previous system they are primarily represented by the LAII group.

A second classification used by the Carnegie Foundation is the Size and Setting Classification (2006b) which combines Full Time Equivalent (FTE) data with the percentages of students living on campus. Table 1 shows the resulting twelve categories. Most of the colleges used in the primary literature for this meta-study are small or very small and are likely to have at least some residential component, making them VS/R, VS/HR, S/R, or S/HR.

Table 1

Carnegie Foundation Size and Setting Classification System

Classification	FTE[a] (number)	Residential[b] (%)
VS4/NR: Very small four-year, primarily nonresidential	< 1,000	< 25
VS4/R: Very small four-year, primarily residential	< 1,000	25 – 49
VS4/HR: Very small four-year, highly residential	< 1,000	50 +
S4/NR: Small four-year, primarily nonresidential	1,000 – 2,999	< 25
S4/R: Small four-year, primarily residential	1,000 – 2,999	25 – 49
S4/HR: Small four-year, highly residential	1,000 – 2,999	50 +
M4/NR: Medium four-year, primarily nonresidential	3,000 – 9,999	< 25
M4/R: Medium four-year, primarily residential	3,000 – 9,999	25-49
M4/HR: Medium four-year, highly residential	3,000 – 9,999	50 +
L4/NR: Large four-year, primarily nonresidential	10,000 +	< 25
L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential	10,000 +	25 – 49
L4/HR: Large four-year, highly residential	10,000 +	50 +

[a] FTE: Full-time equivalent enrollment was calculated as full-time plus one-third part-time.
[b] Residential is defined as institutionally-owned, -controlled, or -affiliated housing.

Invisible Colleges

Astin and Lee's (1972) verbiage "invisible college" seems to be an excellent descriptor of the colleges of interest to this study. They used the criteria of small size and low selectivity to define colleges that are invisible to the general public. It is this invisibility that allows these colleges to struggle and close relatively unnoticed. However, low selectivity is not inherently a criterion for inclusion in this research. Sometimes lack of selectivity is a response to a state of decline that began many years ago. In other cases, lowering selectivity is a technique for revitalization.

Liberal Arts Colleges

A conversation about small, private colleges is often considered akin to a discussion about liberal arts colleges. A number of researchers and authors have done research specifically focused on liberal arts colleges. Breneman (1994, p.12) has taken a detailed look at the future of private liberal arts colleges. Rather than accepting the Carnegie classifications of LAI and LAII, he defined liberal arts colleges as those that award the Bachelor of Arts degree in basic liberal arts and sciences majors, are residential in nature, and enroll less than 2,500 traditionally aged full-time students. Many of the "invisible colleges" are, or at least were, liberal arts colleges. However, unlike the invisible colleges, liberal arts colleges can be very selective. Furthermore, a traditionally liberal arts college may continue to call itself a liberal arts college long after diversifying to more professional and vocational programs (Kirk, 1984). Liberal arts colleges are certainly a group of interest to this study, but once again, this concept is not a complete description of the colleges under discussion.

For the purpose of this study, a set of parameters was established for the types of colleges to be included. The parameters capture the colleges that are currently the most vulnerable to decline. They are the "small, traditional, residential" four-year colleges that cater to a full time 18- 22 year old constituency. These colleges have been an important component in higher education in the United States for many years, but they are being displaced by large public colleges and universities, proprietary colleges, distance education, and elite private research universities.

Current Condition of Small Private Colleges

It may be a surprise to some that small, private colleges are considered threatened. Other than religious or governmental entities, very few types of organizations have the long and virtually uninterrupted history of growth seen by these colleges. Their position should be the envy of almost any type of industry or organization. Yet, throughout their history concern has been expressed for their survival (Breneman, 1994, p. 1).

Most recently, concern about these colleges was evident in the literature in the 1970s and early 1980s. At that time, the youngest of the baby boomers were finishing high school and the number of upcoming college aged students was declining. The so called "golden age" was ending and it was replaced by the "new depression" (Cheit, 1973). Fear that there would be widespread and massive college retrenchment and closures permeated the literature of the time (Breneman, 1994, p. 23). However, the predicted disaster did not occur and concern for these colleges abated in the later part of the 20th century. Does the lack of concern in the literature mean that concern is no longer warranted? A look at current data regarding these colleges will be useful.

Enrollment and Number of Small Private Colleges

Overall enrollment in private higher education has grown almost without interruption. Even at the end of the baby boom, when worry about enrollment was so strong, growth continued. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the growth of private college enrollment and the number of private institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a). However, public institutions of higher education have grown even faster. Enrollment in private higher education as a proportion of total enrollment dropped significantly in the mid 20th century. Figure 3 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a) indicates the percentages of students enrolled in private higher education plummeted from the 50% range shortly after WWII to about 20% in the early 1970s. The good news for private colleges is that this 20% range has remained fairly steady for over 30 years. The dramatic percentage drop between WWII and 1970 may have been more of a

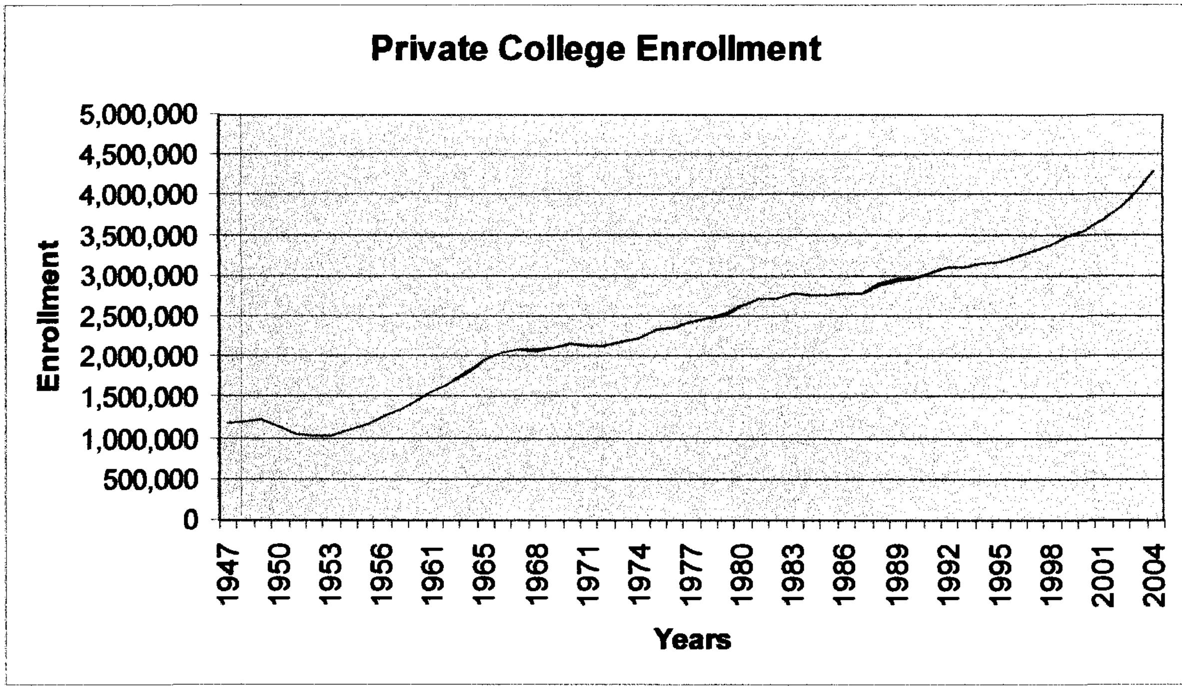

Figure 1. Total U.S. private college enrollment, 1947 - 2004

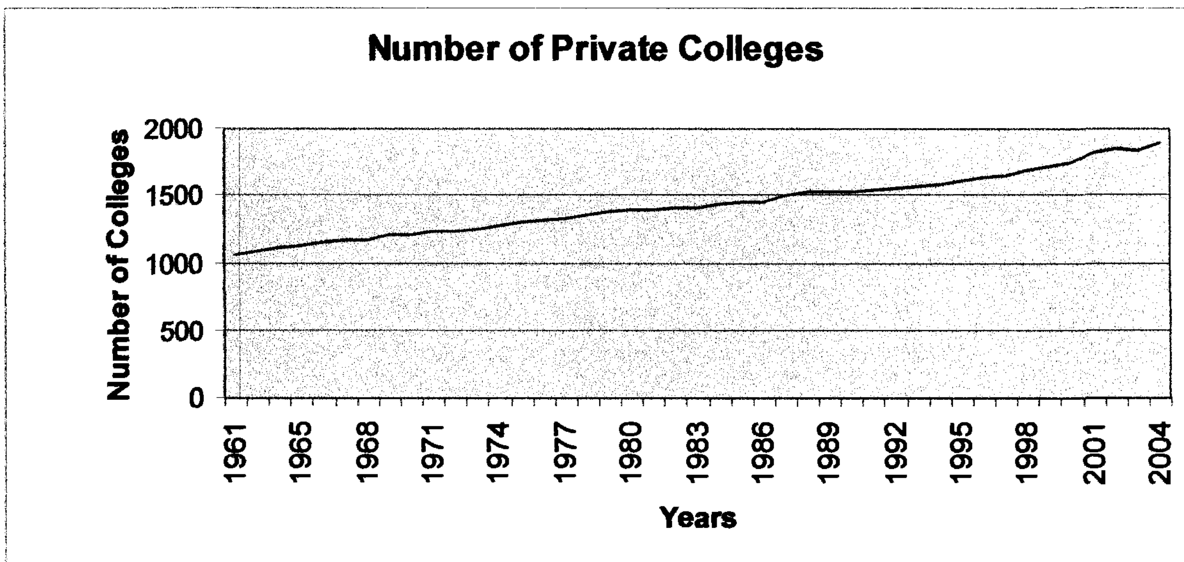

Figure 2. Total number of private institutions, 1961 - 2004

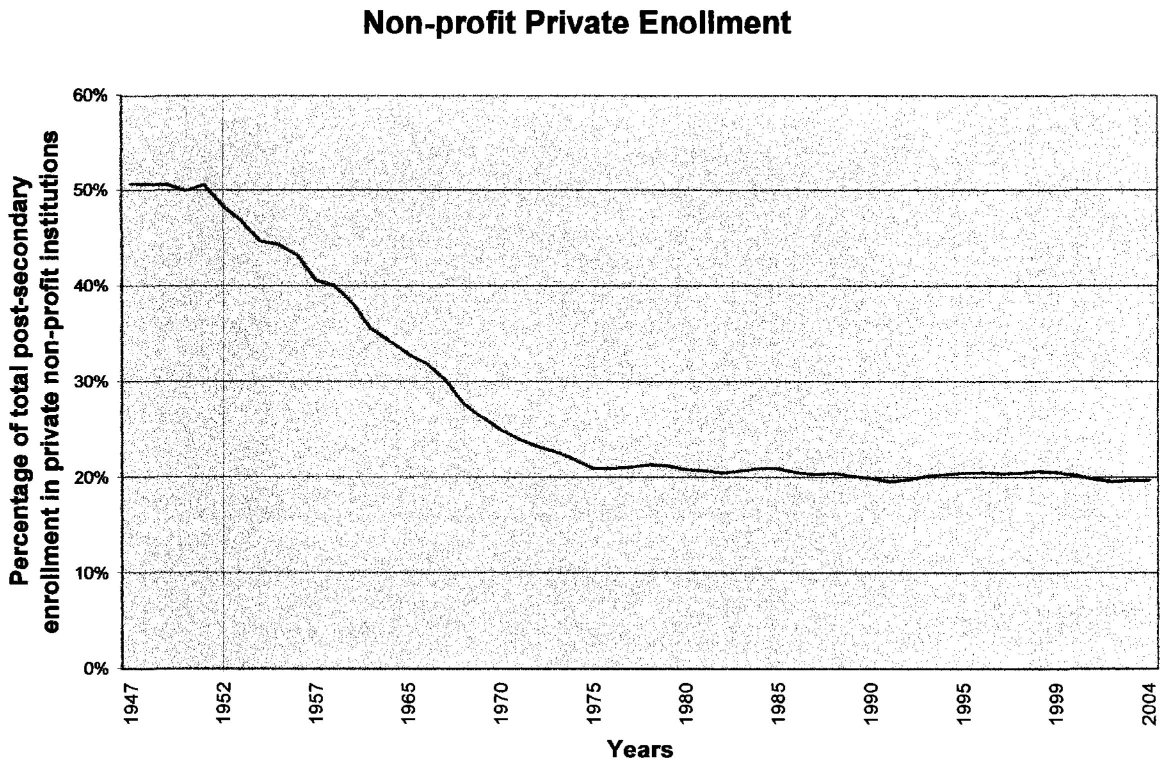

Figure 3. Percentages of students enrolled in private, non-profit colleges and universities

reflection of the increase in the number and size of public universities during that time period than a particular weakness within the private sector. Regardless, private higher education is clearly less dominant now that it has been in the past.

Private higher education encompasses many sizes and types of institutions. Table 2 further breaks down the Department of Education data on private colleges by size capturing the smaller, baccalaureate institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2000 & 2006b).

Table 2

Private, Baccalaureate Institutions by Size - 1998 and 2003

College size	Number of institutions*				Total enrollment *			
	1998		2003		1998		2003	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Under 200	57	7.9	10	1.9	5,377	.6	1,373	.2
200 to 499	85	11.8	48	9.1	29,733	3.4	17,361	2.3
500 to 999	196	27.1	129	24.4	142,904	16.2	97,396	12.8
1,000 to 2,499	323	44.7	279	52.8	515,194	58.4	447,715	59.1
2,500 to 4,999	61	8.4	62	11.7	188,679	21.4	194,254	25.6
Total	722		528		881,887		758,099	

*Note - The data did not distinguish between profit and non-profit institutions so both are included

The total of 528 small, private baccalaureate institutions in 2003 represents 13% of the total institutions included in the U.S. Department of Education database. The enrollment numbers reflect 4% of the total enrollment in higher education. Clearly, this type of institution represents a very small part of post secondary education. And the numbers are getting smaller. The comparison with 1998, five years prior, shows sharp decreases in colleges with enrollment under 2,499.

The Carnegie classifications data show a similar trend. Between 1973 and 2000, the total number of institutions of all classifications increased by 39%. Nearly every classification uniformly shared in this increase. The exception was the LAII category (the least selective liberal arts colleges) which decreased from 575 colleges to 378, a 34% decrease. What happened to so many institutions in so short a time? Some institutions may have expanded or changed their programs so that they are no long classified as Baccalaureate or LAII institutions. However, some of them have closed their doors.

College Closings

One estimate is that 700 liberal arts colleges have come and gone over the history of higher education in the United States (Breneman, 1994, p. 20). Data show that between 1970 and 2005, 539 college and university campuses ceased to exist through closure or merger. Most of these (495) were private, of which 239 were four year institutions. Figure 4 shows a breakdown of these 239 closings in five year increments (U.S. Department of Education, 2006c).

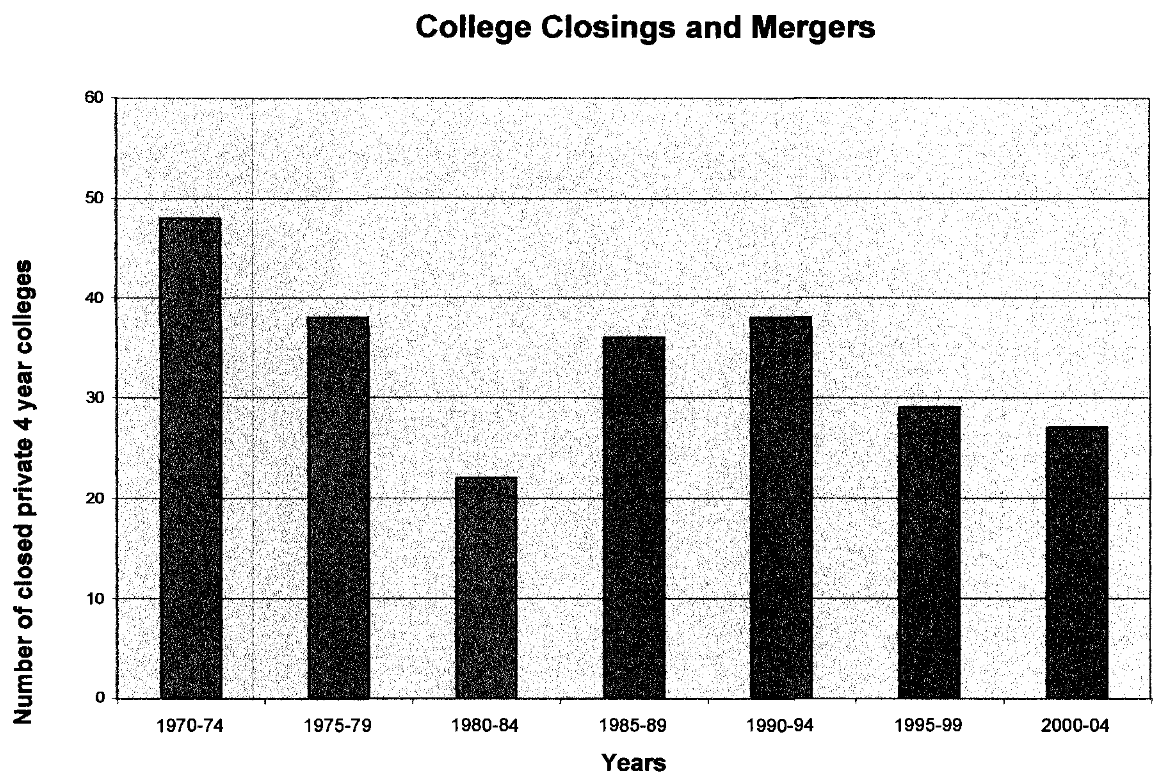

Figure 4. Number of 4-year private college closings in 5 year increments, 1970 - 2004

Interestingly, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw what appears to be the beginning of a decrease in college closings rather than the predicted massive die off. In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind that colleges generally do not close suddenly. A few difficult years are not likely to bring an otherwise healthy college to the brink of closure. A college can continue to operate in a state of decline for 20 or 30 years, long after a profit making business would have dissolved (Cowen, 1993). So, it may not be surprising that college closings did not spike immediately.

There has not been consistent recordkeeping of the closed colleges, so a comprehensive overview of them is difficult. Several organizations have lists of the names of closed and merged colleges, but the lists do not have enough information about the colleges to easily define them. It is known that most of them are private. The government is unlikely to let a public college or university flounder if it is poorly managed or it leaders make unwise decisions. In the private sector there is no such safety net (West, 1982). An institution that flounders for too long may eventually close its doors.

One analysis of closed colleges suggests the following characteristics appear often: small, single-sex, religiously affiliated, tuition-dependent, modest-endowment ratio, heavy depreciation, high default, poor retention, low conversion yield, junior colleges, liberal arts colleges, underleveraged, and with non-performing assets (Martin & Samels, 2006). Another discussion of closed colleges particularly emphasizes the religious nature of many casualties. Catholic women's colleges have been especially hard hit by closings and mergers (Hawkins, 1999). A more comprehensive review of the nature of closed colleges appears to be a topic for further exploration.

Summary of the Condition of Small Private Colleges

A simple yearly average of the closings reflected in Figure 4 indicates seven private four-year colleges have closed each year since 1970. Does this number reflect a crisis in private higher education?

Conclusions regarding the seriousness of the condition of small private colleges are mixed. In 1982, Dan West asked the question, "How endangered are small colleges?" He cites three clear arguments from the literature at that time regarding their plight.

1. Twenty six private colleges went out of business in the 1970s in New England alone even while the college age population was still growing.
2. In the 1960s half of college aged students attended private colleges, but 20 years later only 20 percent did so.
3. The number of private colleges has been declining for years.

He immediately provides the following rebuttals to each of these arguments.

1. Although private colleges were closing during the 1970s, others were opening or earning accreditation resulting in a net increase in the number of private colleges.
2. Private colleges saw a decreasing percentage of total enrollment, but actual enrollment did grow. The public sector simply grew faster. In fact, if you exclude the public two year colleges, enrollment in private four year colleges during the 1970s increased faster than four year enrollment in public colleges.
3. The number of private colleges has actually grown over time including the 1970s.

He concludes that the ingenuity, tenacity, and creativity of small private colleges have enabled them to survive and even thrive (West, 1982).

Although West's question and resulting analysis was written 25 years ago, this review of literature has found very similar mixed messages in the 1990s and into the 2000s. In 1996, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* had the following three headlines, each in different issues.

- Private Colleges in the Northeast See a Surge in Enrollment: Many of them are Scrambling to Find Space for Record Freshman Classes (September 20, 1996)

- Desperately Seeking Students: Some Colleges Spend Summers Trying to Fill the Freshman Class (June 21, 1996)
- Enrollments Surge After Large Tuition Cuts at Private Colleges: Reductions by a Few Institutions Followed Years of Increases (August 9, 1996)

The conclusion of this researcher based on this literature review is that, as a sector, small private colleges have been remarkably resilient and adaptable. But, the survival of the small, private college sector does not mean that every individual institution within the sector will thrive or even survive. So, while there continues to be growth among small private colleges as a group, there are many individual colleges that struggle and close.

An unanswered question in this review relates to the nature of the individual colleges that are closing. If the closed colleges disproportionately represent a particular subset or group of colleges, then their closures reduce the diversity available in higher education. We do not know if the colleges that close are simply the weaker schools falling prey to market forces or are we losing some important element within the higher education community (Wynn, 1974)? The ongoing concern for small, private colleges, in combination with the continuing closures, suggests research that benefits this sector of education is useful and necessary. This research is an attempt to provide guidance to those individual colleges that are in decline but are hoping to join the ranks of colleges that have been adaptable and resilient. For those institutions, a further examination of weaknesses and strengths of small, private colleges seems useful.

Measures of College Decline and Viability

Closing a college is a drastic step and the goal of this research is to find colleges that have been able to recover from decline before closure became necessary. Because decline is not always recognized as soon as it should be, a measurement of college viability would be useful.

Accountants and financial managers have financial ratios that provide an indication of the financial health of an organization. Nathan Dickmeyer has been a leading researcher in attempts to measure the financial health of colleges and universities. He and his colleague (Dickmeyer & Hughes, 1979) developed a workbook specifically designed to help small, private colleges conduct a self assessment of their financial condition using a combination of financial ratios calculated from easily available data. The workbook was pilot tested on eight colleges, four perceived to be financially strong and four perceived to be financially weak. The workbook was useful in helping colleges see and understand their financial strengths and weaknesses and better articulate their problems. Interestingly however, the workbook was not able to differentiate between the four strong and four weak colleges. The authors of the instrument concluded that this failure might not have been due to limitations in the workbook, but was due to misperceptions on the part of the experts that classified them as strong or weak to begin with. However, the authors concluded there was not a measure or predictor that could fully capture the financial health of a college. They theorized that some combination of measures might work, but that combination had not been found (Dickmeyer & Hughes, 1979).

Given the lack of a measurement for college decline, authors seeking to study such colleges need to have some way to identify them. Often they have established their own criteria. When Hamlin and Hungerford (1989) were looking for revitalized colleges to survey, they sought colleges that had experienced “severe distress”. Their definition of this term included meeting at least three of the following criteria.

- A 5 percent decline in fall enrollment for three or more years
- An endowment smaller than institutional expenses for two or more years
- A decline in gifts for two years
- A decrease in surrounding area employment for two years
- Deferral of 50 percent of plant and equipment repair for two or more years
- A 10 percent rise in energy costs for the past three years
- Tuition income/total expense exceeding 60 percent for at least two years
- Net worth/debt declining for two or more years
- Expendable funds ÷ plant debt lower than 1:1 for two or more years
- A decline in gifts ÷ total expense for three or more years

Another study of college financial health resulted in a list that the authors named “dashboard fragility indicators”. Again, these indicators can be calculated using easily available data (Martin & Samels, 2006).

- Successive operation budget deficits
- Institutional enrollment below 1,250
- Tuition dependency of more than 90 percent
- Tuition discounting of more than 40 percent
- A student default rate above 6 percent
- Debt service of more than 12 percent
- A less than three-to-one ratio between endowment and operating budget
- Average tuition increases exceeding 7 percent
- Deferred maintenance that exceeds 50 percent
- Successive short-term bridge financing required in the third or last financial quarter
- Less than 10 percent of operating budget devoted to technology
- An average alumni gift of less than $75, with fewer than 20 percent of alumni giving
- Student yield behind competitors
- Institution on financial watch of accreditation agencies

One of the more comprehensive and complicated efforts to create an indicator for viability came in 1981 from Gilmartin’s work. He established 61 variables utilizing aspects of enrollment, revenues, expenditures, tuition, indebtedness, and assets to create a

Distress Score (DSCORE). The study found the indicators more closely associated with college distress were:

- Mean salary of full time faculty (change variable)
- Number of full time equivalent students
- Number of full time faculty
- Mean salary of full time faculty (static variable)

When evaluating distress by educational sector, the LAII colleges were found to have highest DSCOREs. Other subgroups that had high distress scores included some denominational colleges, women's colleges, and historically Black colleges.

Gilmartin's DSCORE was used in an attempt to relate viability to the market value of an institution's degrees (Rossi, 1981). At two year colleges, there was a medium correlation ($r = .29$ $p \leq .0001$) between the market value of degrees offered and the viability of the institution. At four year private colleges, low but consistent correlations were found between indexes that measured the efficient use of resources and viability, indicating that colleges that use resources efficiently were slightly more likely to be viable.

Most of the above efforts focused primarily on numerical or financial data. But non-profit higher education might be best measured in other ways. At the most basic level, one explanation of a viable college is simply one that can attract and keep good students through to graduation (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996). A recent work by Heinrichs (2002) examined the impact of organizational effectiveness on institutional viability. The goal was to find a measurement that took into consideration the institution's mission and size. No support was found for her proposed theoretical framework for viability but findings did indicate that Baccalaureate (Liberal Arts) Institutions were in the weakest financial state of the four groups. The other three groups she measured, Doctoral

Institutions, Master's (Comprehensive) Institutions, and Specialized Institutions were strong, doing better than she expected.

In another study that looked beyond financial data, the following warning signals were identified by questionnaires and interviews at ten public universities as indicators that an institution was in decline (Glenny & Bowen, 1981).

- Reliance on soft money for programs
- Reductions in budget for supplies, equipment and travel
- Charging fees for formerly free services
- A drop in applications and a lowering of admissions standards
- Application deadline moving later and closer to registration
- Increasing dropout rates
- Hiring from within to save costs of national searches for the best faculty
- Faculty teaching outside their areas of expertise or teaching odd hours
- Increasing or decreasing teaching loads
- Encouragement of early retirement
- Increases or decreases in use of part time faculty
- Faculty salaries increasingly disproportionate to the budget
- Maintaining weakened programs even when enrollment drops
- Delay of maintenance

In 1983, Cameron and Chaffee conducted a survey of 334 four-year colleges in the United States to look for statistical differences in non-financial criteria between colleges judged to be in decline or not. When stable colleges were grouped with the colleges in decline and compared against the growing colleges seven items emerged as significantly different.

- Intensification of conflict (often over resources)
- Worsening morale
- Abrogation of innovation and risk
- Resistance to change
- Across the board budget cuts (as opposed to selective cuts)
- Making leaders scapegoats
- Loss of leader credibility

The effect found by Cameron and Chaffee (1983) was even stronger in small, private colleges than in larger, public institutions. Small liberal arts colleges in decline also had stronger perceptions of reduced educational effectiveness than research universities and comprehensive colleges. One possibility for these findings is that smaller institutions had fewer resources, so they were affected more acutely by these issues (Smart, 1989).

Jann Freed (1987) sought a relationship between planning processes within small liberal arts colleges and institutional viability (defined as perceptions of reputation and quality, selectivity, and endowment) but did not find any significant correlations.

Although a number of attempts have been made, no industry wide definition or measurement of viability has emerged. Most efforts to relate viability to specific variables have not met with much success. But one common theme has emerged from this work: when institutions were analyzed by sector, the small, liberal arts colleges were more likely to be in distress or less viable than other types of educational institutions.

Challenges Facing Small Private Colleges

Why are the small, independent, primarily liberal arts colleges more likely to close or be less viable than other types of institutions? Clearly there are challenges for these colleges that affect their viability. A further review of the literature can provide some insight into these challenges.

Enrollment

Declining enrollment is often the first and most obvious sign of decline for a college or university. Small institutions are more vulnerable to enrollment fluctuations than their larger counterparts. In an institution of 200 students an enrollment drop of 20 students represents a critical 10% reduction in the student body; the same 20 student decrease would be virtually unnoticed in a large institution. Since most small colleges are highly tuition dependent, an enrollment decline can translate into a critical revenue decline.

> While some high profile institutions still have large endowments, most independent schools have modest resources, and rely heavily on tuition income to make ends meet. When a stumbling economy causes even a handful of parents and prospective students to choose a public college over a private one, the latter school's already slim operating margin can narrow precipitously (Wellman, 2002, p.1).

In a survey of the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) Small Colleges Issues Committee, the top three issues of concern to small colleges were improving student retention, projecting enrollments, and developing effective marketing approaches (Bissell, 1992). These are not surprising concerns for the membership of AACRAO. However, a breakdown between public and private small colleges found small, private, tuition driven colleges had higher levels of concern for these issues than small public colleges that were more concerned about serving nontraditional students. Public institutions have a wider variety of other sources of revenue; therefore, they do not have to be as single mindedly focused on enrollment as the small private schools.

Financial Pressures

Because of the tuition dependency of many small, private colleges, enrollment and financial pressures are closely related challenges. One of the reasons private colleges have more difficulty attracting students is their high tuition. Without government funding, private colleges pass on a larger percentage of their costs to students than do public colleges. While tuition at all institutions has increased dramatically, private schools were higher to begin with and the gap has widened. This growing differential between public and private tuition is raising demands for accountability. Students and their families want to know why they should pay more for a private college education thereby increasing pressure for private colleges to justify their outcomes (Stimpert, 2004). The elite private colleges can justify costs through their reputation but less well known colleges have a harder time articulating their value. Public institutions attract students with lower costs; elite private colleges can attract them with their reputations; but less selective private colleges are caught in the middle and have neither low cost or reputation to attract students (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 36).

The reasons for the high cost of education are numerous and complicated. Education in general is a labor intensive endeavor, but it is even more labor intensive at small colleges because they offer smaller classes and are less likely to use adjunct faculty or graduate students as teachers (Stimpert, 2004). As colleges try to adapt to the marketplace, new programs must be added regularly, requiring new faculty and new facilities. Technology costs are a regular expense as each college competes for new students by having the latest technology available. Student demands are greater too. Social problems have impacted college campuses increasing the need for expanded health and counseling services, security, and support programs (Neely, 1999; Stimpert, 2004). With fewer students to share the costs of new technology and services these costs can have a large effect on a small institution.

Financially struggling institutions have two options open to them. They can increase revenues or cut expenditures. In the early days of retrenchment in the 1970s, many colleges moved first to cut expenditures and control costs. It started as marginal, belt tightening, but quickly cost control escalated dramatically (Cheit, 1973). Unfortunately, dramatic cuts cannot continue indefinitely. Deferred maintenance, salary freezes, and program cuts eventually take their toll on the institution's ability to function. In a review of 13 institutions that had experienced fiscal stress, the conclusion was that "short-term economizing is not the key to fiscal health, but it could well damage the institution's ability to achieve its mission" (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996, p.16).

Quality Distress

How does reduced spending affect the mission of a college? Having fewer resources available for faculty, facilities, programs, and student services raises the possibility of quality distress replacing (or adding to) financial distress (Wynn, 1974). Wynn undertook a 13 year study of the financial condition of 48 liberal arts colleges as they were coming out of the "golden age". He sensed an increasing financial vulnerability as they sought to reduce expenditures. Wynn surmised that this financial vulnerability could lead to decreasing quality and innovation.

Without resources, a college in financial distress cannot get the best faculty and staff, they have fewer activities and opportunities to offer students, and facilities become less than desirable. Yet without these features, the new students and donors needed to increase revenue are not easy to attract. Fewer students bring in less tuition revenue creating a need for more cuts. More cuts make attracting new students even harder. The process of needing more students, but not being able to attract them, ultimately creates a downward cycle for the institution.

Tuition Discounting

One technique used to maintain affordability and attract students is to use heavy tuition discounting in the form of financial aid. The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Institutional Aid Survey found that the average published tuition increase for the respondents was 60.6% during the 1990s. However, net tuition (the published tuition minus institutional grant aid) increased by 35.6%. Published tuition, therefore, is becoming less meaningful as colleges and universities put more and more of their money into aid for students they most want to attract. Small colleges with low tuition (as opposed to small colleges with high tuition – generally the elite colleges) are doing this the most, with the highest published tuition increases of the group (62.4%), but the lowest net tuition increases (31.6%). The same group had the highest number of freshmen receiving aid with 86.5% getting some aid compared to 63.7% of freshmen at large colleges and universities. The small colleges also had the largest increase in amount of aid with a 23% increase over the decade versus 9% for all institutions (Lapovsky, 1999).

Increasingly, small private colleges are unable to enroll enough students at the published price. They are relying on the strategic use of institutional grant aid (discounting) to increase enrollments. Smaller colleges who are already trying to keep tuition below their competitors are doing the most discounting, possibly indicating that they struggle the most to fill their classes.

Competition

The marketplace for higher education has always existed. But colleges and universities have traditionally had some shelter from the full impact of competition. This is changing for all types of institutions as higher education is becoming more of a commodity defined by consumer demand (Paul, 2005). Small, private colleges, in particular, face competition from an increasing variety of sources. They compete with each other for a limited pool of students interested in their unique educational environments. They compete for students with public institutions, which can be significantly less expensive to attend. They also compete with public colleges and universities for donor dollars as the public institutions have begun more development activities to supplement dwindling state support. Public institutions are also opening branch campuses in rural areas, often the same areas that are home to many small, private colleges. Finally, small colleges are competing with new forms of education. For profit institutions are growing at a phenomenal rate. With their small classes and moderate or low selectivity, they offer some of the same characteristics that the more traditional colleges offer, but without the residential component they appeal to a broader audience. On-line education and distance programs are also adding to the educational supply (Moore, 2002).

With all of this competition, small, private colleges must distinguish themselves. For some colleges this has proved difficult. Colleges that once catered to marginalized groups find that they no longer have a competitive niche. When women were not taken seriously in many places, the women's colleges had an appeal that they no longer have. Likewise, historically Black or Native American institutions had virtually no competition at one time. Liberal arts colleges have a market niche, but it is no longer well understood. Student and parents do not see them as practical for career preparation when compared to other types of institutions. In a survey of 1,000 people regarding attitudes toward liberal arts education, only 27 percent of parents and 14 percent of high school students rated themselves as very familiar with a liberal arts education. Both groups had little understanding of the value and purpose of liberal arts education (Hersh, 1997). Such low understanding of the sector makes it that much tougher to compete in the current market place of higher education.

Trend toward Non-Traditional Professional and Career Education

Students are increasingly viewing their investment in higher education in terms of an economic payoff, and consequently fewer students understand the value and benefits of a liberal arts education. Add in the deterrent of high costs and it is becoming harder to sell the idea of a traditional liberal arts college (Stimpert, 2004). In a summary of several survey based reports, it was discovered that a large majority of the general population believe workplace preparation is one of the most important roles of higher education. Most respondents had no understanding of the reason for general education courses or the liberal arts (Harvey, 1995). To compete with the growing focus on career preparation and the new diversity of delivery styles of education, some traditionally liberal arts colleges have added career and non-traditional programs. Variables that reflect a departure from the more traditional aspects of small, liberal arts higher education (e.g., expanded course offerings, off campus programs, athletic teams, and commuter students) have been found to have predictive value in accounting for enrollment increase (Buffington, 1987). It is generally believed one of the reasons more small colleges did not close during the 1970s and 1980s is because they turned away from their traditional roots as liberal arts institutions and moved toward alternative delivery systems and vocational and professional training (Hilpert & Alfred, 1987).

Moving away from the liberal arts into more market friendly types of education has become a common revitalization technique and is often viewed as a pragmatic course of action for a small, struggling college. This is a controversial tactic, however. For one thing, it confuses the mission and sets the college on the path of survival though meeting ever changing student demands (Neely, 2004). The changing mission also leads to a state of flux resulting in a confused public image (Astin & Lee, 1972). In one comparison of three thriving colleges with three similar colleges that eventually closed, the surviving colleges all rejected attempts to add continuing education programs, while the closed colleges added them (Merline, 1998, p. 223). The clash between vocational and liberal arts education is the source of conflict on many small campuses (Boyer, 1987, p. 3-4).

Leadership Issues

Lack of leadership and lack of institutional mission are two often cited reasons for college decline (Cowan, 1993; Merline, 1998). Leslie and Fretwell, Jr. (1996) found many signs of managerial shortcomings in their study of colleges in fiscal stress. In Cowan's review of 16 small colleges (1993) none of the colleges studied began their turnaround process until a new president came. The previous presidents were unable to see the decline or simply attributed the problems to enrollment or financial issues. An established president found it easy to declare that the negative indicators creeping in were related to admissions (they were not recruiting enough students), development (they were not raising enough money), or the finance office (they were not maintaining a balanced budget). Leaders failed to realize these may be symptoms of an institution in trouble rather than causes. It took someone new to understand what was really happening (Cowan, 1993). Top administrators have also been found to be more optimistic about the condition of a declining college than middle managers suggesting those at the top are less able or less willing or able to see the decline (Sellars, 1992, p.75).

Adding to the challenges faced by college leaders is inherent resistance to change. Without the need to adapt to a fast paced market environment, colleges do not have the same sense of urgency that businesses may have. The faculty wields much power on a college campus, yet they often live in a sheltered world protected from fiscal realities. Overcoming faculty resistance to change may take more than simply communicating the issues to them. It may take a full scale cultural change (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996, p. 67). Often the catalyst for this type of change is a crisis that threatens the very survival of the institution (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996). Presidents must be able to address the challenge of leading change in these times of crisis.

Value of Small Private Colleges

The challenges facing small, private colleges are many. If the demand for this style of education is weak, should they even continue to exist? The evolutionary concept of the "survival of the fittest" would suggest that colleges not able to meet an identifiable need at a price the market will allow should be left to the marketplace to dictate their survival. This may be a short sighted view, however. A defender of these colleges would surely respond that the value of education to society must be considered in a larger context than simple economics. One such defender was Daniel Webster. In 1818 Dartmouth College was fighting in court for its status as an independent institution. A tearful and passionate defense of the college was made by Mr. Webster, a lawyer, and also an alumnus.

> This, sir, is my case. It is the case, not merely of that humble institution, it is the case of every college in the land. . . . Sir, you may destroy this little institution . . .

> but if you do . . . you extinguish, one after another, all those great lights of science, which, for more than a century, have thrown their radiance over the land! It is, sir, as I have said, a small college, and yet there are those that love it . . ." (qtd. by Rudolph, 1965, p. 209-210)

Do the reasons that evoked such passion for a college still exist? Are they worthy of such passion? Geoffrey Canada would say so. Raised in the inner city, he was a Black youth looking to escape the Viet Nam draft by going to college. Through a series of unexpected events, he found himself at Bowdoin College, a small, liberal arts college in Maine. As a young Black man expecting to find an environment of women and parties, the mostly White, all male college was a shock. Despite his initial disappointment, in hindsight he states, "Bowdoin was my kind of place. I spent four years there and would not trade those four years for any other college experience in the world" (Canada, 1999, p. 127). He raves about the intimacy, the caring community, the relationships with faculty, and the growth and learning that he experienced. "When you see that vision [of democracy] you recognize how awesome it is, how awesome the promise of America is, and why liberal arts colleges like Bowdoin, where that vision was nurtured and continues to be supported, are critical to making that vision a reality for all the country and indeed the world" (Canada, 1999, p. 132).

Passion, however, is not a tangible reason for judging these colleges. A more objective analysis is in order. The small, intimate learning community praised by Canada is a good starting point for a further review of the value offered by small colleges.

Focus on Teaching and Individualized Attention

Small colleges focus primarily on teaching with small class sizes and low faculty/student ratios (Cohen, 1998, p. 304). Small classes are generally associated with all of the best practices in teaching. Education can be personalized and can enhance learning in critical areas such as writing, thinking, and speaking. There are also more opportunities for working with faculty on projects or engaging independent study (Stimpert, 2004). Large research universities are sometimes criticized for their use of graduate students and adjunct faculty as teachers while professors spend their time and energy on research and publications. For many students, the small, more intimate atmosphere of a small college supplies a much richer learning environment.

In 1984, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted a comprehensive review of 29 diverse colleges and universities. In chart after chart relating to questions about teaching, advising and community, (generally small) liberal arts colleges were rated higher than any other kind of institution by both faculty and students (Boyer, 1987). These outcomes were echoed by Astin's (1999) review of the evidence supporting the value of liberal arts colleges. A strong negative correlation ($r = -.72$) between the student orientation of the faculty and the institution size reflected the importance of smallness to student satisfaction with the learning experience. A strong negative correlation ($r = -.69$) between research orientation and student orientation was also found in a study of 212 institutions indicating research oriented universities (generally larger) were not as student centered as (generally smaller) teaching oriented institutions (Astin, 1999). For good reason, small classes, individual attention, and opportunity for interaction with faculty are features that are promoted heavily by the publicity and marketing functions of many small colleges.

Residential Nature

Small colleges also promote their residential nature and the importance of residential life. The quintessential rite of passage for American youth is the process of "going away to college." Young adults leave home for the first time to live in a college residence hall. In addition to classes and books, they learn about life. They learn to compromise with roommates and make decisions about how to spend their free time. They develop a social network, become involved in campus events, try new activities, and develop leadership skills. In short, they grow up.

The small, traditional college is usually residential in nature and puts a high priority on campus life beyond the classroom. Campus activities and student life are part of the experience and many small colleges require campus living for at least part of the student's education. Public and large research universities may also have residence halls and activities for those who want them and seek them out. Some large universities have experimented with living/learning communities that emulate the traditional, small college residential experience. But even when involvement and residential living exist at a large campus, opportunities are not available for everyone and it is easy to stay anonymously in the background.

In a review of the research and literature to create the "ideal" college for the 21st century, Chickering and Kytle (1999) present a strong case for the residential experience. Their conclusion is that "sixty years of research documents the superior educational power of small, residential colleges" (p. 109). The residential experience develops the whole person and creates an intensive, engaged learning environment.

Diversity in Higher Education

The generic title "small private college" encompasses a tremendous range of institutions and is used to refer to many different groups of colleges. Many of them are religious; varying from religious in history and name only to Bible colleges that incorporate a particular denominational world view in all that they do and teach. Others have their roots as historically female, African-American or Native-American. A large number would have considered themselves liberal arts colleges at some point, but over time they have evolved and now run the gamut from pure liberal arts to comprehensive to solely vocational. Some have no graduate programs; others have a sizable number of advanced degrees. Admissions standards range from highly selective to open enrollment. As stated often in this paper, some are economically prosperous while others struggle to make ends meet each year.

It is this diversity that makes this group of institutions hard to define and even harder to research. But it is also this diversity that makes these institutions so important to the U.S. system of higher education. The private sector can foster educational options that simply would not be accepted in the public realm. St. John's College in Annapolis, MD and its unique teaching of Western Civilization through the great books perspective is widely regarded, but has such a limited appeal that the general public might hesitate to support it. As a small private institution, it has escaped the political controversy that would no doubt engulf a public university that tried to use this teaching method (Pattillo, 1990).

Much of the value of the small, private colleges is found in this diversity. Americans like choice and options. These colleges provide choice in religious orientation, gender, ethnic focus, and accessibility. In fact, it is the diversity of U.S. higher education that is often cited as the source of its strength. "The range of American higher education is little short of astounding" (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996, p. 82).

Religious Orientation

Historically many colleges were founded by religious sects or denominations. As the public sector has demanded the elimination of religious doctrine from public education, religious teaching is conducted almost entirely by small, private colleges. In an increasingly secularized society, many parents and students still look for an educational environment that embraces their religious values. These colleges provide an option for them.

The demand for religious education seems to be strong. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) reports that fall 2005 enrollment at member campuses grew 70.6 percent between 1990 and 2004. This growth compares to 12.8 percent for all public four-year and 28 percent for all independent four-year campuses (Green, 2005). This increase does not reflect any increase in the number of CCCU institutions which was held constant; however, it should be noted that CCCU does not include all religious colleges. CCCU also notes their colleges have a 4-5% higher than average overall sophomore retention rate. Graduation rates, however, are a lower than average by a similar percentage (CCCU, 2007).

Historically Black and Female Institutions

Small liberal arts colleges have been progressive in their attempts to provide access and opportunity for education to those on the educational fringes. Contrary to the image of elite private colleges for wealthy Caucasian males, many of these colleges have been far more open. As many as six such colleges were established for freed slaves before the end of the Civil War (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p.23). Research into the importance of small, Historically Black Colleges (HBC) indicates that African-American students have higher GPAs, higher self esteem, and higher retention at HBCs when compared to other institutions (Astin, 1999).

Small liberal arts colleges were also the trendsetters for coeducation. (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p.23). The early women's colleges were some of the few places where women could pursue intellectual pursuits (Hawkins, 1999). Although very few single gender colleges remain, the few women's colleges that are succeeding are small and private (Pattillo, 1990).

Accessibility

Small, private colleges are still answering the needs of the less elite. As a sector, private colleges are more accessible than commonly believed. The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (2006) reports that overall, private and public colleges serve similar numbers of ethnic minorities and low and middle income students. In fact, private colleges enroll a higher proportion of "at risk" students than public institutions and have higher graduation rates for these students.

In some cases, this accessibility is by design, in other cases it happens inadvertently. Quality in higher education has often been measured in terms of average incoming student GPA and test scores. Colleges and universities seeking to improve their ranking and reputation will attempt to raise these averages by recruiting, admitting and financing the academically stronger (and usually wealthier) students. A college faced with enrollment shortfall, however, will often lower admission standards to fill classes. This can be a dangerous move as it sends a message of desperation and lowered quality. On the other hand, it increases accessibility to the less academically able or less well prepared students. Non-selective institutions provide a resource for students who desire a traditional four-year college education but are not able to get into the more elite private colleges or overcrowded public institutions. These are also the students who benefit most from need based aid, bringing in much needed state and federal aid money (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p. 39). A small college with low selectivity will develop staff and programs geared toward the needs of the less academically able providing an ideal environment for those who want the traditional college experience but cannot gain admission to the more elite colleges (Astin & Lee, 1972).

Adaptability and Distinctiveness

Perhaps the characteristic of small, private colleges that has had the most impact on their survival is adaptability. A small, flat organization is by nature more flexible than a large bureaucratic one. This flexibility can create a more responsive organization that can quickly move to meet changing needs (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p. 33). The absence of a large bureaucracy or governmental control can be an advantage to a leader seeking to accomplish specific goals within the organization (Hotchkiss, 2002).

The movement from pure liberal arts to more practical or applied education is one example. Shortly after WWI a movement toward accepting business as a legitimate field of study emerged. Small colleges moved quickly to respond to this need and began integrating business into their curriculum more quickly than larger institutions (Bonvillian & Murphy, 1996, p. 26).

Small colleges may also have an intangible quality that helps them to pull together in times of crisis and change. "Perhaps the least understood characteristic of many small independent colleges is their inner spirit. Often, precisely because of their smallness, there is an esprit, a sense of community and loyalty, a feeling of pride that provides them with a support base that may be invisible to outsiders, but is nonetheless there and can be mustered in time crisis" (West, 1982, p. 17).

Economic Value and Payoff

One reason for attending college is the economic benefit of having a degree. One point of some uncertainty, however, is whether or not the added cost of attending a more expensive private college pays off in terms of future earnings. In general, studies have confirmed the economic value of attending a private Ivy League College (Gose, 2000). One longitudinal analysis of earnings by college sector found evidence that attending "top" or "elite" private institutions had a tremendous payoff when compared to attending other types of colleges. Even attending a "middle" private college had some economic benefit. The effect for attending a "bottom" private college, when compared to attending a "bottom" public institution was unclear, however, and possibly even had a negative effect on earnings (Brewer, 1998).

A potential flaw in much of the research on this topic is the fact that the students attending the elite private institutions begin with a different profile than the students attending less selective colleges. In an attempt to remedy this, Krueger and Dale examined the earnings of students who were admitted to an elite college but voluntarily chose a less selective institution. Surprisingly, the average income of these students was even higher than that of the students who chose to attend the elite colleges, suggesting that it is the qualifications of the student, not the reputation of the college that accounts for higher earnings (Gose, 2000). Unfortunately, this research may or may not be relevant to institutions with the very lowest selectivity making the economic value of these colleges still unclear.

An interesting phenomenon related to the value of a pure liberal arts education is found in the work of Richard Hersh (1997). While the public increasingly believes a narrowly focused professional education is the best preparation for the job market, employers are saying the opposite. They value the communication skills, social skills, critical thinking, and problem solving skills that are developed through a broader liberal arts education. Professionally trained students are too narrowly focused and unable to adjust to the changing workplace.

Hersh (1997) conducted a nationwide survey of public attitudes toward the liberal arts. The survey included 1,000 people representing various stakeholder groups including college-bound high school students and their parents along with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Human Resource Managers. He found that the business executives were among the groups most appreciative of a liberal arts degree with 49% of them viewing liberal arts as very positive and virtually none of them responding in the negative. Parents and students, however, viewed liberal arts far less positively and labeling a liberal arts education a "luxury".

Selectivity Issues

Some caution may be in order at this point. It was not always clear in the research if the colleges studied included a cross section of small colleges or if the focus was on the more elite, well known colleges. This researcher found it unusual for authors to make much, if any, distinction between selective and non-selective colleges and when they did, they were usually focusing on the selective colleges. For instance, in Astin's review of the empirical evidence supporting liberal arts colleges he states, "these results suggest that the *selective liberal arts college* [italics added] comes closer than any other type of institution in the American higher-education system to achieving a balance between research and teaching" (1999, p. 91). Further exploration of the issue revealed that while both selective and non-selective colleges exemplified a number of the "best" educational practices, the selective colleges reflected the practices to a greater degree. He theorizes that the selective colleges may have more resources to devote to achieving "best practices". He concludes, "residential liberal arts colleges in general, and *highly selective liberal arts colleges* [italics added] in particular, produce a pattern of consistently positive student outcomes not found in any other type of American higher-education institution" (Astin, 1999, p. 77).

When the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) evaluated sophomore retention rates, they also did a breakout by selectivity. CCCU member institutions as a whole had higher retention than the average for all institutions. But when they were broken down by selectivity, the less selective colleges had noticeably lower retention rates than the more selective colleges (CCCU, 2007).

Another interesting analysis of the role of selectivity can be found in a breakdown by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Hebel, 2007) of the graduation rates of low income serving Historically Black Colleges (HBCs). Selectivity at the public HBCs seems to have little effect on graduation rates as indicated by Table 3. However, graduation rates at private colleges show a much greater sensitivity to selectivity.

Table 3

Graduation Rates at Low Income Serving Historically Black Colleges by Selectivity

	Public		Private	
Selectivity	Number of institutions	Average graduation rate (%)	Number of institutions	Average graduation rate (%)
Very selective	4	31.35	4	56.73
Moderately selective	14	37.89	17	38.11
Minimally selective	15	34.37	13	27.28

Evidence exists for the other side of the story however. A 1994 correlational study of a small group of small, private, four-year colleges found no significant relationships between college reputation (a construct often closely related to selectivity) and educational value added as measured by the ACT College Outcome Measures Program. Furthermore, very few relationships were found between any financial indicators and educational value. In other words, neither financial strength nor institutional selectivity (measured by reputation) has a relationship to educational value received (Bess & Shearer, 1994). This finding is echoed by The National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment which also found that institutional selectivity had a non-significant effect on cognitive growth in college students (Pascarella, 2001).

The question, does selectivity matter, has not been conclusively answered and may provide an opportunity for further research. It should simply be noted that most of the colleges included in the primary data for this study were among the less selective of the small, private colleges, not by design, but by the fact that these are the ones most likely to be in a state of decline.

Summary of the Value of Small Private Colleges

Despite the challenges faced by small, private colleges, they have much to offer. They focus on teaching and personal interaction with faculty within a complete immersion living and learning environment. They can be innovative and unique, yet they are surprisingly accessible. Perhaps most important, in terms of their survival at least, is their adaptability and diversity If we choose to accept the "survival of the fittest" metaphor, it may be worth extending the image. In evolutionary terms, diversity and adaptability are attributes that contribute to survival of a species. Furthermore, innovation and experimentation come from the outliers (Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). Protecting these attributes is important for the long term survival of the species. This turns attention to the importance of survival and revitalization for the weaker members of the higher education community.

Revitalization of Small Private Colleges

The state of decline of some small, private colleges has not gone unnoticed in the literature. A number of dissertations and journal articles have been done on both closed and revitalized colleges. The research design of such work has generally been the case study, usually of one to three colleges. In a few cases, researchers have looked at groups of colleges in an attempt to identify common experiences that can serve as guidance to others. In other cases, college leaders who have been involved in revitalization efforts have written advice to other college leaders. A review of the insights from these sources will provide a starting point for understanding the revitalization process.

Revitalization Studies

Many studies have been done on various aspects of higher education leadership, management, and change. There have been studies of what makes a college successful, studies of closed colleges, and studies that looked at the differences between the two groups. Research has examined a variety of types of institutions and various subsets of institutions. Some studies examine one particular aspect of revitalization. This research was most interested in studies that take an in-depth look at the entire revitalization process of groups of small, private 4-year colleges. Using this definition, three studies emerged from the literature as being the most similar to this project. They are examples of research based on the joint experiences of a group of small, private colleges that have successfully moved from decline to revitalization. These studies were done by Chaffee in 1984, Hamlin and Hungerford in 1989 and Cowan in 1993. A 2007 work by MacTaggart will also be included as a key piece of research related to this study.

Chaffee

Chaffee's study was the earliest of the three and took a case study approach to eight colleges in various stages of recovery from a crisis. She presented the colleges in some detail but did little analysis of their collective experiences. She did note, however, that the difficulties faced by the colleges were all a function of their own conduct, not the external environment. She found leadership to be an important part of the internal condition of the college. "I was particularly engrossed by the extent to which quality of leadership seemed to influence the course of institutional experience . . . for small private colleges in trouble, finding an able and dedicated leader is a matter of life and death" (Chaffee, 1984, p. 2). Effective presidents surround themselves with capable administrators and earn the support of faculty, staff, and students. Upholding and articulating the values of the institution round out the task of the president.

Hamlin and Hungerford

The importance of the role of the president was confirmed by Hamlin and Hungerford (1989). Based on a survey of 51 institutions that had been in financial distress they concluded "the ultimate success or failure of the institution largely depends upon the ability of its leader" (p. 36). The survey asked presidents to rank the value of activities undertaken to revitalize their institutions. Expanded recruiting, fundraising, and public relations were the most effective activities. Redefining the mission, goals, and academic programs were also represented near the top of the list. Fiscal responsibility activities, including layoffs, showed a medium level of importance, although enhancing revenue was dominant over cutting expenses.

Cowan

Of the studies examined, the most comprehensive analysis of the process of decline and turnaround was undertaken by Cowan (1993). Her *prescription for turnaround* was based on in-depth interviews at five small colleges and cursory reviews of 11 others. She found that it took some time for the colleges to realize or admit they were in a state of decline since decline is not as obvious in a non-profit organization as it is in a business enterprise. Once the college became aware that things were not going well, there arose a wide diversity of opinion on campus about what was wrong. It was common to begin by blaming external forces such as the economy, demographics, or some particular event that affected the institution. As noted by Chaffee, however, externals were generally not the cause of the problem.

The next step in the decline process was to blame the symptoms of decline: decreasing enrollment, decreasing endowment, and increasing expenses. At this point, the leadership focused on solving these problems through admissions and fundraising efforts or through decreased expenditures, efforts that were not effective in the long term (Cowan, 1993). It is interesting that these are exactly the types of activities the presidents surveyed by Hamlin and Hungerford (1989) ranked as the most effective in the turnaround processes. Cowan's study, however, delved deeper into the organization for understanding. The beginning of revitalization came with the willingness to acknowledge that decline was not external, and that the *symptoms* of decline were not the *causes*. The issues to deal with were strategic, operational, and symbolic, and needed to be addressed by the president. In Cowan's research, this realization was always made by a new president coming to the college from the outside rather than the president who had presided over the decline. The ability to diagnose the challenges, develop a clear vision, mobilize the campus in a change process, and keep the campus focused were attributes that were necessary for new presidents.

These change agent presidents were not able to do it alone, however. Collaborative decision making and participative management were also requirements for success at the 16 colleges. Maintaining the college character and symbolic efforts designed to create enthusiasm and motivation were important parts of the change process. Finally, operational effectiveness could not be ignored. Colleges had to use their resources effectively.

This analysis done by Cowan served as the basis and inspiration for this research. The overarching question left by her research: Will a larger and more comprehensive cross section of colleges produce a similar "prescription" or will other variables and concepts emerge?

MacTaggart

A final study of interest to this research was published in 2007 in a book called *Academic Turnarounds: Restoring Vitality to Challenged American Colleges and Universities* edited by Terrence MacTaggart. This work took an in depth look at the turnaround process of 40 colleges and universities and attempted to learn as much as possible from their collective experiences. MacTaggart did not focus solely on small, private colleges; it was a comprehensive study that included large colleges and public institutions. However, the intent and goal of his study is so similar to that of this dissertation, it seems useful to include it as a relevant comparison study.

MacTaggart found the revitalization process occurred in three stages. The stages are presented in a chronological pattern; however there is often some overlap or blurring of the stages. Stage 1 is the restoration of financial stability. The first and most critical requirement of a college in distress is to get its financial house in order. Stage 2 includes elements of marketing and branding. Marketing is the process of promoting what the college offers. In some cases this may involve adding new programs or improving what the colleges already had. Branding is the enhancement of the college's image or reputation. The final stage, Stage 3, involves strengthening the academic programs and culture. This might include a complete and fundamental change in identity and mission or it may simply involve drawing upon existing strengths to focus on and develop. It includes substantive, internal change of the organization. This is a more time consuming stage and according to MacTaggart it is the least often accomplished.

Advice from the Literature

In addition to these three revitalization studies, many authors have sought to provide advice to struggling colleges. In many cases this advice is based on the experiences of a college leader or literature reviews of successful or unsuccessful colleges. Some authors have taken an in-depth look at specific areas of college management. Some is general guidance; other advice is targeted to a particular stakeholder group. Nevertheless, there are many resources that provide insight into the issues that may emerge from an analysis of the revitalization process.

Distinctive Mission and Vision

Many authors emphasize the importance of institutional identity and mission as a primary component of a successful college, a position consistent with both Cowan's and Chaffee's findings. A distinctive identity can give focus to resource allocation and provide a powerful socializing force (Stimpert, 2004). A distinctive identity also provides marketing appeal. In the business sector managers are told to find a market niche. "No company can succeed today by trying to be all things to all people. It must instead find the unique value that it alone can deliver to a chosen market" (Treacy & Wiersema, 1995, p. xii). Similar advice is often given to colleges. "Good colleges do not attempt to be and do all things," says Eva Brann of St. John's College, "our individual salvation lies in institutional distinctiveness" (1995, pp. 59-60).

The importance of distinctive mission is not limited to small liberal arts colleges like St. John's College. In a series of in-depth interviews with 13 colleges and universities that had experienced hard times between 1989 and 1995, Leslie and Fretwell Jr. wrote an advice book for college leaders. The source of this advice came from a diverse group, including large research universities, public and private colleges, and two year colleges, but the advice came in almost the exact same words, "we can't afford to be all things to all people anymore" (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996, p. 55). These institutions noted that a broader focus spread resources too thinly which exacerbated fiscal stress, became unwieldy, and possibly lowered quality.

But creating a unique and distinctive mission is not without peril. Focusing too narrowly limits the marketplace and limits the appeal of the institution (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996, p. 78). Building strong, distinctive programs in the long run may mean eliminating other programs and losing enrollment in the short run (Hotchkiss, 1995). This is a risky endeavor for a small, struggling college. Furthermore, the appeals to liberal arts colleges, Black colleges, or women's colleges to stay true to their mission can be unrealistic if they are not able to find students who appreciate that mission. "One often hears that a college, like an excellent company, should tend to its knitting if it wants to be successful. But, if its knitting is making buggy whips, then what?" (Peck 1985, p. 28) To reconcile these contradictory tasks, the college mission must be focused and distinctive, but also relevant and adaptable.

Leadership

The importance of leadership was obvious from Chaffee (1984), Hamlin and Hungerford (1989) Cowan (1993) and MacTaggart (2007). Cowan (1993) and MacTaggart (2007) both found that none of the colleges studied were able to start the revitalization process until a new president was hired. An outsider was able to see what an insider did not.

Other literature echoes the importance of the leader. A college leader's job description is almost superhuman. In times of resource shortages, fund raising and enrollment management are considered core competencies. Furthermore, the leader must be strong and able to make tough decisions but also able to maintain positive working relationships with faculty and administration (Merante, 1993). Colleges are managed though a system of shared governance between the administration and faculty. Presidents must be able to effectively work with that structure. The intimate, familial community in a small college opens the door for faculty and staff to put a lot of pressure on leaders to "do it my way" or to "respect the way we have always done things." Faculty and staff in a small college have the ear of the leadership and want to make sure their voices are heard (Hotchkiss, 2002). However, presidents of small colleges also have the opportunity to exert more influence than their peers in larger institutions (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 205).

Presidents in turnaround situations may need to make hard decisions regarding program cuts and layoffs. Arthur Kirk (1984) struggled with this dilemma in his attempt to turn around College Misericordia in Dallas, Pennsylvania. In retrospect, he discovered that some of his attempts to handle and communicate difficult decisions came across as dictatorial and arbitrary, costing him much needed support in the change process.

Lindquist (1978) addressed this dilemma further in a review of seven colleges and universities undergoing a change process. On the surface, it appeared that ordering change by presidential fiat was the most effective approach, but he found this raised skepticism, scrutiny, and resistance from the faculty. Furthermore, changes implemented by this method tended not to last. Change by committee was not particularly effective either. The most effective changes were implemented through a series of interactive and participative measures that included faculty meetings, sending faculty to other colleges to learn and observe, small group discussions, extended workshops, training, and continuous leadership from committed advocates. An educational strategic planning model that utilizes many similar processes was developed in 1995 by Weimer and Jonas. They advocated recognizing that the person doing the job is the expert and decisions and accountability should come from the point of action. "Full participation and communication by members of the community serve as a united force with the process" (Weimer & Jonas, 1995, p. 1).

Both of these approaches echo Cowan's (1993) finding that collaborative decision making and participative management were requirements for successful turnaround. Indeed, centralization of decision making was found to be one of three significant dysfunctional organizational attributes of small colleges in severe decline when compared to colleges that were growing or in less severe decline (Sellars, 1992). Still, presidents can be frustrated by the difficulty of getting various constituencies to make hard decisions and commit to real change, particularly when faced by a crisis (Leslie & Fretwell, Jr., 1996) Presidents must be able to juggle the need for decisive and action oriented decision making, while honoring the unique challenges of shared governance and participative decision making.

In MacTaggart's (2007) three stage model he found each stage demands a different leadership style. An autocratic leader may find some success in stage 1 which involved getting the financial house in order. A college that needs to take draconian measures to survive may be served well by a strong leader. The second stage of marketing and branding may be better served by a managerial type of leader. The final stage of academic change is best accomplished by a more collaborative leadership style. Naturally, few individuals can encompass all three leadership styles, although some leaders can adapt based on the circumstances. However, the 40 colleges in his turnaround study primarily had collaborative styles.

Presidents of successful small colleges must also seek opportunities and take risks. Although risk taking can be scary in a declining organization, continuing the status quo can often be an even bigger risk (Peck, 1985). A state of decline may force innovation to ensure survival (Tuckman, 1985). Peck calls upon small college leaders to be "entrepreneurial," a word he defines not to mean a Las Vegas sort of risk taking but rather innovation and opportunity seeking. He observed this behavior in a study of 19 successful small colleges (Peck, 1985). He also found successful presidents to be mission focused and driven by sharp intuitions refined by a strong intelligence network.

Presidents of troubled institutions cannot forget the importance of sound and efficient management (Berte, Botstein, Chandler, Levine, & Read, 1985). Leaders enhance their credibility if they are competent and able to get things done effectively. In this sense they need to be good bureaucrats (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 223). Colleges are urged to use difficult times as opportunities to reevaluate poor performing programs and initiate cost efficiencies (Wellman, 2002).

Caution must also be extended to a president seeking to lead a revitalization process. Organizations are resistant to change and, although successful change does occur, there have also been presidents who have attempted to lead a change process and failed. Taking on a turnaround challenge can be a "prescription for joint misery" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 227).

Strategic Planning and Change Management

Troubled times are often the catalyst for engaging in long term planning and change in any type of organization. Colleges generally resist change, and when it does happen it is often due to external factors forcing the change rather than deliberate, internal planning (Lindquist 1978). Financial distress, for instance, can create more openness to change (Cheit, 1973). A surge in interest in strategic planning in the late 1970s and 1980s may reflect a reaction to the fear of troubled times ahead.

Colleges and universities are organizationally different from profit making businesses and some of these differences have ramifications for planning and change management. There is, for instance, a fundamental difference in governance. The trustees, the administration, and the faculty are all primary decision making authorities on a college campus. Each group is supposed to have priority in decision making within different realms, but conflict and power struggles still occur (Birnbaum, 1988, pp. 4-9). There are also outside sources of control; for public institutions it is the state government and for private institutions it is often a religious group, major funders, or the alumni association. Accreditation agencies and federal and state public aid policies greatly impact both public and private institutions.

Within the college, the existence of tenure and the unique professional skills of the faculty eliminate the traditional forms of organizational power and structure. Rather than responding to coercive or position based sources power, faculty choose to give leaders power based on expertise or respect. Social exchange theory suggests that followers will accept the authority of the leader in exchange for the needed support and services from the leader (Birnbaum, 1988, pp. 23-24). But this voluntary support can be withdrawn if the leader is not viewed to be fulfilling his or her part of the arrangement. College leaders who do not understand this and try to use coercive tactics can alienate the very people whose support they must have to enact change.

Higher education has a unique difficulty in establishing a clear mission and goals. Making money, although a crass oversimplification, is at the root of most for-profit company visions. College and university mission and goals, on the other hand, are not as clear cut. There is no easily defined "product" and quality of educated students is not easily measured. Furthermore, the various units and departments on campus have differing, sometimes contradictory goals (Birnbaum, 1988, pp. 10-12). Is it more important to get students in the door (admissions goals) or to make sure those that are admitted graduate (retention goals)? Is the value of education judged by the breadth of the curriculum (liberal arts department goals) or the placement rate and starting salaries of graduates (vocational program goals)? The breadth of interests and values within a college result in difficulty agreeing on resource allocation and prioritization.

Because of these differences in higher education, management, planning, and change models developed for business may or may not be completely satisfactory for higher education. In 1978, Lindquist stated there had been little study specifically targeting college and university change processes. To address this omission and to add to the knowledge on the topic of college and university change, he conducted seven case studies of academic changes as they occurred in colleges and universities. From these cases, he established strategies for what he termed "adaptive development". He suggested that colleges not try to innovate from scratch, but rather to learn from others and use existing models. He supported simple ideas and advocated pilot testing. Finally, he discussed the importance of reward systems; a topic not always discussed in higher education literature.

Small colleges were the focus of a planning guidebook *Planning in Small Colleges* (Miller, 1980). This handbook emphasized that planning is a process that should be given as much attention as budgeting, teaching, research, or any other college function. Planning was defined as the process of controlled change. "The essence of planning is to insure the achievement of desired change rather than to accept the uncertainty of uncontrolled change" (Miller, 1980, p. 29).

Borrowing from strategic planning models for business and industry as well as education, Jaggers (1985) created a linear strategic planning model specifically targeted to small, private colleges. The model created a formula for plans, tasks, activities, and communication within each of five phases: pre-planning, foundations for strategic planning, current situation analysis, strategic decision making, and strategic implementation and actions. Some of the topics in his analysis included centralized versus decentralized planning, top down versus bottom up planning, and participatory versus advisory planning. His conclusion was that planning should balance centralized and decentralized processes and participation should include a broad spectrum of the campus. But ultimate decision making authority and responsibility should be in the hands of the president, vice-presidents, and trustees.

The level of planning can also influence who participates in it. While the president, vice-president and trustees may take the lead in strategic planning, the day to day tactical planning is more appropriate for the department heads and program directors. Planning may be occurring at multiple levels simultaneously (Miller, 1980). In an ideal situation, the strategic plan and mission of the college will become ingrained into all of the planning processes at all levels (Weimer & Jonas, 1995).

The Role of the Board of Trustees

The leadership role of the board of trustees in revitalization has also received attention in the literature. While the board's role in private higher education may be more ambiguous than the role of a corporate board, one of their responsibilities is clearly to hire and support the president (Paul, 2005). And, college presidents agree that the board has the key role in determining the college mission and values (Berte et al., 1985). In times of institutional challenge, boards are encouraged to take a more active role (Wellman, 2002).

Not only should boards take mission and leadership hiring very seriously, they need to support and partner with the president once he or she is in place. Their role also includes strategic planning, ensuring financial soundness, and making policy. They should stay informed and involved, particularly if the institution is in trouble. This involvement requires psychological and resource commitment from responsible board members (Cowan, 1994). Board members should make sure the difficult decisions are being made. This may include program elimination and layoffs. Like a corporate reengineering program, a leaner and more efficient organization is often needed for a revitalized organization (Hotchkiss, 1995).

The Role of Admissions and Development

Hamlin and Hungerford (1989) and Cowan (1993) found different approaches to the role of admissions and development in their studies. Enrollment and fundraising represent the most obvious areas of decline and consequently are easily seen as the first places to fix when a college is in decline. The presidents surveyed by Hamlin and Hungerford (1989) seemed to agree, concluding that recruitment and fundraising activities were the most effective revitalization techniques. MacTaggart (2007) makes it clear that getting the financial situation in order (which likely involves increasing enrollment and fundraising) then marketing and branding must be given primary attention. Cowan (1993), on the other hand, concluded that declines in enrollment and fundraising were simply symptoms of decline and not causes. Addressing these issues was not enough to save a college in decline so her prescription for turnaround focuses on less tangible activities such as leadership, mission and vision.

Admissions consultant George Dehne (1991) puts the role of admissions in perspective; "The curriculum committee must understand that they make more significant marketing decisions than does the admissions office when they add a program or take away a course." MacTaggart (2007) indicates that marketing and branding may require adding new educational programs. Enrollment is a function of what the college has to offer and simply putting money into the admissions function is not enough if the college does not have the right programs. The closure of Barrington College is a prime example.

> In the last five years of the College, much was done by the administration to pay more attention and to allocate more resources to the function of admissions. . . . The College was just not sufficiently attractive to potential students, and no amount of effort on the part of the admissions process was going to help that (Merline, 1998, p. 212).

A group of college presidents giving advice to their peers agree: good programs must come before marketing and enrollment efforts (Berte et al, 1985).

Of course it is possible that mismanagement in these areas can cause decline. An industry of enrollment management consultants exists to help colleges address these issues. But if "fixing" these offices does not raise enrollment or increase fund raising, Cowan's position that these are symptoms of something deeper must be seriously considered. Although Cowan does not use the terms, her analysis of the issue could be reflective of the distinction between single loop learning and double loop learning as defined by Argyris (1980). The term "single loop learning" refers to learning that occurs when an error is detected and solved, but there is no underlying change in values, policies or purposes within the organization. It involves problem solving at the most obvious level. In this case, addressing admissions and development as the sources of decline is a straightforward and reasonable approach. Cowan found that initially many of these problem solving efforts appeared successful in meeting their stated goals. But eventually the colleges continued their decline. The "rush to find one-shot solutions wastes time, diverts resources, and squanders irreplaceable assets" (Cowan, 1993, p. 32).

It was only after these efforts failed that the institutions began to ask deeper questions about what was happening. Questioning is the first step in "double loop learning" which occurs when detecting and correcting error results in changed values and policy. The outcome is fundamental change within an organization. The changes that saved Cowan's colleges were related to issues of leadership, organizational purpose, decision making processes and operational effectiveness: the fundamentals of the college's values and policies. "A college's vision of its future should be of an entire institution transformed" (Cowan, 1993, p. 36).

Further insight into the role of admissions and development was provided by Chaffee (1983) in an analysis of 14 colleges, some of which survived difficult times and some of which did not. She analyzed the colleges' responses to decline in terms of "adaptive" versus "constructive" strategies. Adaptive strategies are those most closely aligned with responding to the market place, (i.e., what the college does). Constructive strategies focus more on what the institution represents rather than on what it does (i.e., symbolic efforts enhancing the mission and vision of what the college represents). Relying on adaptive strategies alone was not sufficient. The recovered colleges were the ones that also paid attention to the constructivist elements of mission and identity.

MacTaggart's (2007) Stage 3 involves what he calls "profound transformations". He puts this at the end of the turnaround process, after strengthening the college financially and marketing and branding. He believes the process is difficult and not always done successfully.

Program Development

Most turnaround processes involve some change to the programmatic structure of the college. Liberal arts colleges sometime respond to decline by adding professional or career programs. Innovation and competitive strategizing, concepts more familiar to the private sector, can be applied to colleges. Park College attributes its survival to private sector thinking that inspired them to add distance learning and military degree completion programs (Breckon, 2000).

Leslie and Fretwell, Jr. (1996), in a study of 13 colleges and universities facing fiscal stress, found program changes were the most visible of the changes embraced by the colleges. Some colleges added programs, others reshaped programs, while others cut them. Colleges in weak financial positions had to cut some programs if they were to have enough money to add or reshape others. But cutting programs is risky as some programs may not be a popular draw for students, but they are educationally critical. Or, a program might be considered irrelevant today but will become more important at some point in the future.

Once again the caution that permeates the literature is that programmatic decisions should follow the strategy and mission of the college and programs should not be added haphazardly. Presidents are urged to engage in entrepreneurial thinking, but only within the context of the mission of the college (Peck 1985). In a meeting of five small college presidents, the first of five common lessons they shared was to focus on mission and quality education first, and innovation, pioneering education, and resources would follow. "In short, the experiences of the five colleges show that a focus on education encourages not only institutional vitality, but a budget in the black. Resources follow programs, not the other way around" (Berte et al., 1985, np).

Summary of Revitalization Issues in the Literature

The literature directed toward colleges seeking revitalization has a number of consistent messages. A good president is vital, but support from the board and an effective administration are important too. The leadership must recognize decline and embrace a distinctive mission for the college. Programmatic decisions need to follow from that mission, not the other way around. Increasing revenue and enrollment are obvious goals, but fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency must also be given some attention. Innovation clearly plays a part in revitalization.

However, there are some conflicting messages in the literature. There are a number of issues raised that might be seen as continuums and various authors have advocated actions that seem to hold different places on these continuums. Figure 5 illustrates how these continuums might look. Likely, there are unique circumstances faced by each college that might dictate where on each scale they should be. A more comprehensive look at the revitalization process should shed additional light on how a struggling college may need to address these continuums.

Final Thoughts

There are clearly many challenges faced by small, private colleges in the United States as the 21st century begins. The public is increasingly cost conscious and does not always understand the value of expensive, small colleges. Yet, they have much to offer and, as a group, have shown themselves to be adaptable and resilient. It is the author's belief that the small, private college has an important role to play in higher education and efforts should be taken to support and strengthen this sector. Nevertheless, there may be individual colleges that no longer serve their purpose. An excellent discussion of this dilemma was articulated in 1974, but is equally valid today.

> Unfortunately, proper analysis has not been made of whether the right institutions are failing. It may well be that consumer choice is driving out colleges which educationally have little to offer. This is the conventional wisdom in many circles, and suggests that a corrective market mechanism is at work.
>
> However, the market model does not take into account the fact that, in terms of financial resources, all colleges do not start "equal". Those with ample resources may be able to "play it safe," focusing on survival at all costs. But some colleges which have introduced new educational ideas, which have chosen to take academic risks, are not "elite," are underfinanced, and are highly vulnerable. Anyone familiar with liberal arts colleges can name several such institutions which have recently failed, or are close to doing so.

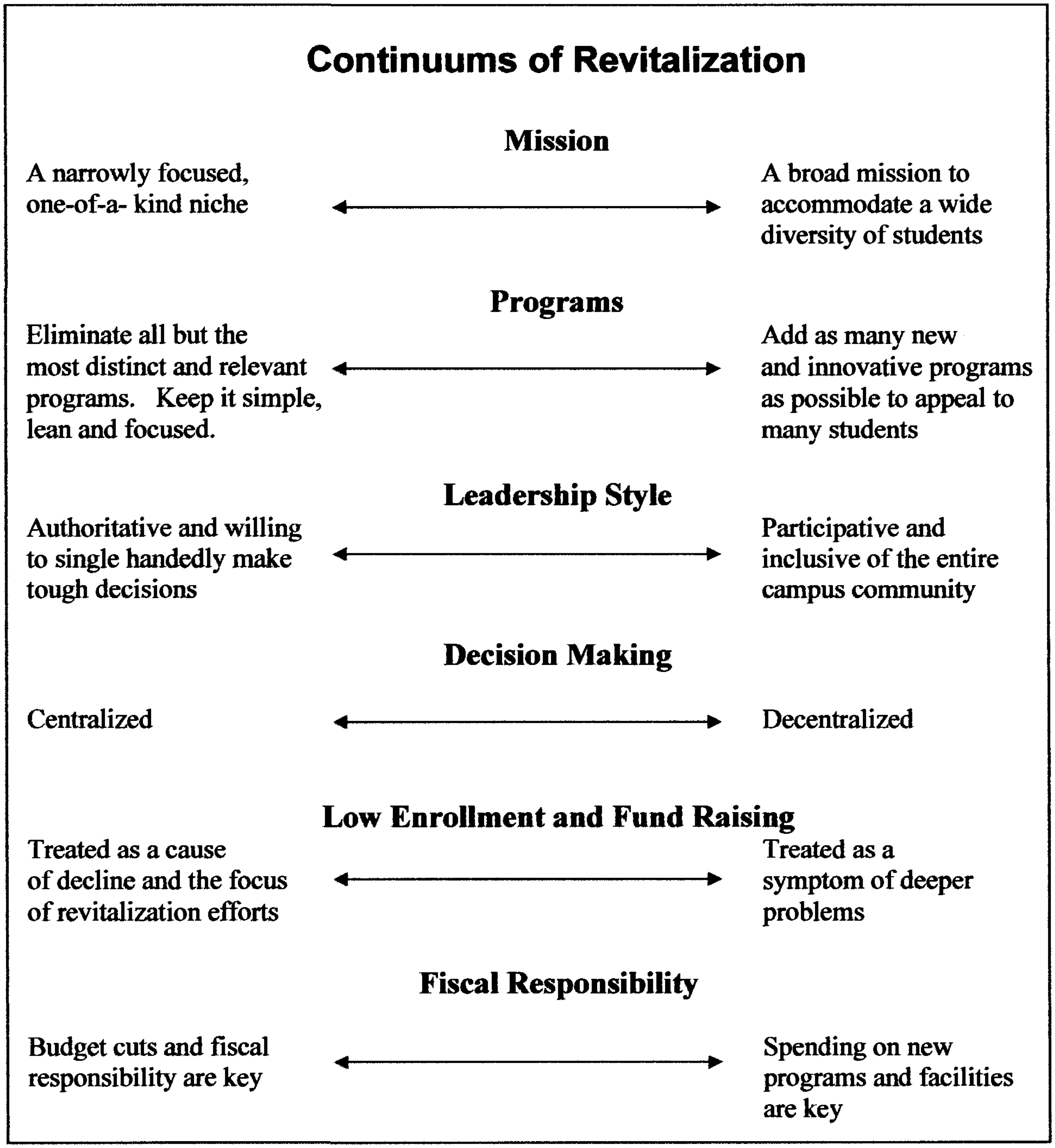

Figure 5. Continuums of revitalization efforts found in the literature

> Thus, higher education may be losing part of its cutting edge of innovation. If, in the course of offering innovative programs, these colleges are going out of business, while those who stand pat survive, higher education is being seriously wounded. The point is not that this is happening. The point is: does anyone know that it is not? (Wynn, 1974, p. 16)

It is the fear that the wrong colleges are closing that drives many researchers and authors to advise and counsel small colleges in the hope that those that are struggling can find a way to strengthen and revitalize. It may also be a passion for this style of education that drove people like Daniel Webster in 1818 and Geoffrey Canada in 1999 to defend their small colleges so vigorously. But, like any other sector with a long history, change will occur. In the early 21st century, the need for change and revitalization appears to be particularly pronounced among small, less selective, private, traditionally liberal arts colleges.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative form of meta-analysis methodology that will be called a meta-study. The prefix "meta" has been paired with a variety of design methods and generally denotes the aggregation of multiple research studies into a coherent whole. The concept was introduced in quantitative research but has spread to qualitative research. Very simply, it refers to "investigations of the results and processes of previous research" (Paterson, Thorn, Canam & Jillings, 2001, p. 5).

In the case of the revitalization of small, private colleges, a large number of them have been studied individually. But, little attempt has been made to evaluate their collective experiences. This study was such an attempt. The goal was to learn more from looking at all of the studies together than could be learned from each study separately. From this larger analysis, a framework or model for revitalization is more easily achieved.

Description of Meta-Study Methodology

The first use of the term "meta-analysis" in educational and social science research is attributed to Gene Glass in 1976. He used the term to "refer to the statistical analysis of a large collection of analysis results from individual studies for the purpose of integrating the findings" (p. 3). He used a statistical measure, the effect size, to statistically standardize the studies so that multiple studies could be aggregated.

The concept of meta-analysis was introduced into qualitative research by Stern and Harris in 1985 (Banning, 2006). They used the term "qualitative meta-analysis" for analyzing qualitative findings. Their process involved evaluating various aspects of a single variable from multiple studies using the techniques found in grounded theory (Stern & Harris, 1985). A more interpretive approach was applied to ethnographic studies by Noblit and Hare (1988). Called meta-ethnology, it emphasized the interpretive nature of ethnographic study. They believed by combining studies it was possible to develop a broader interpretation than through one study alone. Their approach went beyond aggregation and sought to develop a synthesis by translating metaphors and key concepts among ethnographic studies.

While meta-analysis focuses on aggregating quantitative studies, and meta-ethnography aggregates qualitative work, the term meta-synthesis has been defined as the process of using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Bair, 1999). Like meta-ethnography, it is essentially an integrative approach but it allows for the inclusion of multiple methodologies. Other terms have evolved that express a similar concept including simply "qualitative meta-analysis" (Bair, 1999).

The term meta-study is also found in the literature. The term was explained in some detail by Paterson et al. (2001). Their use of the term emphasized the existence of both analysis and synthesis. Analysis is the process of aggregating the findings, methods, and theories of a series of studies. Synthesis is the process of applying this information to the creation of new knowledge. Their resulting definition: "Meta-study is a research approach involving analysis of the theory, methods, and findings of qualitative research and the synthesis of these insights into new ways of thinking about phenomena" (Paterson et al., 2001, p.1).

The goal of this study was to use an analysis of existing research to create or expand knowledge about the topic, so the term meta-study was chosen based on the description of Paterson et al. (2001). This adds a useful, application oriented approach to the research. For the purpose of this study therefore, the specific definition of meta-study is: an analysis and synthesis of available and relevant case studies of small college revitalization with the goal of expanding knowledge to attain a more complete understanding of college revitalization than can be achieved by looking at studies in isolation.

In addition to knowing what a meta-study is, it is important to be clear about what it is not. A meta-study is not a comprehensive literature review. A review is a summary of literature in a broad field. It is not driven by a research question and does not look for a meaningful, interpretive synthesis of the literature.

A meta-study is also not "secondary analysis" which uses the original data from a primary study and reanalyzes the results in light of a different research question or different statistical techniques (Kulik & Kulik, 1989; Zhao, 1991). Meta-study accepts the data analysis and interpretation of the primary researcher and does not try to change the research question. It combines the data and analysis with other similar studies and looks for patterns or relationships across studies.

Rationale for Meta-Study Methodology

A number of reasons for using a meta-research design have emerged from the growing literature on the topic. When Glass (1976) introduced the concept, it was largely due to a desire to make sense of the massive amount of research being done on a topic. Often, the findings of similar studies are contradictory. He wanted something more than the standard literature review to integrate the mass of disparate, and sometimes conflicting, information. Contradictory conclusions can occur in qualitative research as well. A meta-study examines the differences. Perhaps they can be accounted for by the methodology of the study or the samples used. Only a complete analysis of the studies will identify these nuances. Even when studies have few contradictions, a meta-study can be reassuring by providing more conclusive proof of the findings. A college administrator seeking to implement a revitalization process will be more certain he or she is making good decisions if similar decisions have been successful at 20 institutions rather than at just one or two other institutions.

A meta-study consolidates information that is widely scattered. This is particularly useful for practitioners who may not have the time or inclination to sort through numerous studies and reports. The meta-analysis can provide the "executive summary" of research, findings, and theory for easy use. The meta-researcher does the work of compiling, analyzing, synthesizing and theorizing, leaving the practitioner free to absorb and implement the knowledge gained from the process.

A meta-study can also help to identify what is known and where the gaps are in a field of study. The research may reveal that alumni can have a significant role in revitalization, but that role has rarely been studied or discussed. It will also help to eliminate the effect of research that is biased or inadequate. When the cumulative influence of 50 studies is analyzed, the fact that two or three of them are not well designed is of less consequence.

This fuller understanding provided by a meta-study can also be useful in generating theory. Qualitative research has been criticized because it can be hard to generate theory from the small and isolated samples often used for qualitative studies. Meta-study design is more powerful in theory generation because of its use of multiple studies (Estabrooks, Field & Morse, 1994). Similarly, meta-study has been suggested as a tool when theory in a particular discipline is not progressing, goals are not being met, or when practitioners are questioning theory within the discipline. Meta study can search for the problems within the discipline and seek solutions to the gaps (Zhao, 1991).

A final value of a meta-study is its generalizability. Typical qualitative methods, phenomenology, case study, and ethnography often have very limited generalizability. Meta-studies, on the other hand, allow the combination of studies to enhance generalizability because of the larger sample and greater breadth (Morgan, Gliner & Harmon, 2006, p. 16).

The primary rationales for using meta-study methodology for this research were the generalizability and usability factors. Many small, private schools have been studied individually or in small groups. However, small, private education is diverse and techniques useful in revitalizing a very small, rural, Baptist college may or may not be relevant to a mid-sized, secular urban institution. A study of multiple cases can determine if the activities related to revitalization are unique to particular institutions or if common experiences and processes emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172).

The second key reason for choosing this type of design is the usability factor. Knowledge gained from this research is of practical application to small college administrators. These are people who would likely not take the time to read through multiple case studies. Beyond reading, there is the time required to analyze and synthesize what can be learned from the cases. A meta-study is the best way to help administrators learn and apply knowledge gained from the experiences of these colleges.

Finally, this research has been able to establish larger and more comprehensive understanding for small college revitalization than has existed previously. Most current knowledge had been based on individual cases, survey research, personal experiences, or studies of small groups of colleges.

Limitations of Meta-Study Methodology

Despite the appeal of the meta-analysis, no research design is without limitations. A meta-researcher is completely reliant upon the primary researchers' findings and interpretations. The primary researcher may have misinterpreted data or used labeling conventions that obscured the data (Esterbrooks, Field & Morse, 1994). Any mistakes, omissions, and biases present in the first study get translated into the meta-study. And, they may be amplified by the mistakes, omissions, and biases of the meta-researcher who adds a second layer of interpretation.

Adding to the interpretive confusion is the fact that the meta-researcher is reconceptualizing someone else's thoughts and putting them into a new context. Inevitably some misinterpretation will result. Unless concepts and definitions are clear, the meta-researcher can transfer one primary author's definitions onto another primary author, perhaps without being aware that the transference is happening. Primary data can also be inconsistent in the amount and clarity of information provided. There can be differences in reliability, level of detail, consistency of methods, differing levels and skills in analysis, researcher bias, incompatibility of studies, and deductive contamination (Jenson & Allen, 1996).

There is the possibility that the primary study was poorly done. There is considerable debate about including primary studies the meta-researcher recognizes as methodologically unsound. Some have argued that even poor research has something to contribute and should be included (Glass, 1976). Furthermore, excluding too many studies can reduce the available data lowering the validity of the meta-study. Others have responded that the meta-study should exclude studies that are obviously weak as the analysis may be weakened by allowing data that are not up to standard (Esterbrooks, Field & Morse, 1994).

Other decisions regarding what to include in the meta-study must be made. Does the date of the research limit its relevance and timeliness? Do studies that have some relevance but approach the problem from a different viewpoint belong? How different can the viewpoint be before the study is excluded? Will this different viewpoint taint the results without the meta-researcher knowing it? These questions reflect the importance of well thought out criteria for inclusion.

Finally, there is the possibility that some important and valuable research is missed. To fully embrace the advantages of the meta-study methodology, the study should include all available research that meets the identified and supportable criteria. It is unlikely and difficult to be sure that all relevant studies are found.

Meta-study methodology is still fairly undefined and there are some areas of confusion and debate about it. Without more discussion and refinement there will continue to be some uncertainty within the design (Jensen & Allen, 1996). However, with these limitations in mind, there is much to learn from a meta-study both from methodological and theoretical perspectives. After examining and using meta-study methodology, Paterson et al. (2001, p. xii) "became convinced of the potential that meta-study holds for extracting evidence from large bodies of qualitatively derived knowledge".

Data Gathering

The strength of the meta-study design is largely due to the inclusion of a wide diversity of information, so the search for primary research takes on fundamental importance. The lack of a full search can be a serious flaw in the methodology so it is vital that the pursuit of primary data is systematic and inclusive rather than haphazard. (Kulik & Kulik, 1989). The first step in this process is the determination of the criteria for inclusion of primary research.

Criteria for Inclusion

The primary data used for this study were studies that evaluated the experiences of small, private colleges that had successfully revitalized from a state of decline. Therefore, the goal of the data search was to find the studies of such colleges.

The first series of inclusion decisions related to the type of studies to be included. An initial review of the research revealed that a number of colleges have been the topic of doctoral dissertations. Other authors have written the story of a particular college or colleges as a journal article. Regardless of the source of the story, most of the research uncovered during the initial search used a case study or collective case study design.

The case study is a simple and familiar research design. The researcher typically presents a narrative story of the object of the case. This may include a chronology of major events, details on particular events deemed to be important, interpretations of what was happening, and recommendations or lessons learned (Creswell, 1998). Data are gathered through multiple sources; typically interviews, document analysis, audio-visual resources, personal observations, and public records. The subject of the case must be a bounded system identifiable by time and place (Creswell, 1998). In this research, the system was the campus community, including the campus itself and relevant stakeholders such as alumni, trustees, students, faculty, staff, and the community surrounding the campus.

The case study easily emerged as the main methodological criteria for inclusion for this study. Collective case studies, which consider more than one college, were also included as long as some information about each college was discussed and considered individually. The sources for the cases were both dissertations and journal articles.

Gray areas emerged in the form of journal articles that appeared to be advice or musings of a college official regarding a revitalization process or in situations in which the author gave attention to just one or two key variables (i.e., how the board of trustees responded to decline). To make decisions regarding these issues, the key elements expressed by Creswell were considered as criteria for inclusion:

- A narrative story that includes either a chronology or details of major events on the college campus
- A bounded system of a college campus and key stakeholders identified by a specific time period
- Usage of multiple sources of information

The second series of inclusion decisions related to the type of college being studied. The purpose of the study relates specifically to the traditional, small, residential colleges. These colleges can clearly learn from other types of institutions, but the basis for a model directed specifically to them should come, as much as possible, from the experiences of similar organizations. Therefore, the subject of the cases was limited to the following types of colleges.

- Private, non-profit
- Post secondary, four year institutions
- Enrollment of 5,000 or less at some point during the time frame of the primary study
- Either liberal arts or comprehensive
- More than 50% undergraduate
- Historically traditional, residential, campus-based programs

To limit the scope of the research a cut off date was necessary. Studies begun in 1980 or later were judged to be appropriate for several reasons. Twenty five years provided a good diversity of available information but not so much that it was overwhelming to the researcher. Also considered was the considerable change that occurred in higher education during the 1970s as colleges were coming out of an era of tremendous growth and suddenly thinking about retrenchment. College survival was a popular topic at the time but the future was cloudy and chaotic. By 1980, some of the panic and chaos had passed and the new realities of higher education were clearer; therefore, the experiences of colleges from 1980 forward are more likely to be instructive for colleges of the present and the future

One final comment should be made about inclusion criteria. While studies were excluded due to the type of institution studied, the age of the turnaround process, or the lack of case study methodology, no case studies were excluded based on the quality of a college's revitalization techniques. Some of the tactics used by an organization in distress might be regarded as acts of desperation or trendy gimmicks. This may be true; however, it would be presumptuous for a researcher to impose values of what a college should or should not do for inclusion in a research study so no such judgments were made. Colleges were also not excluded based on their current condition. To do so would involve making too many judgments about what subsequently went wrong and when. If the primary author at the time of the primary study believed that the college had turned around at that time, the college was accepted into the study.

Procedures for Finding Primary Studies

Electronic databases and catalog searches were the primary tools used to find studies for inclusion. The databases used for the search included the Educational Resources Informational Center (ERIC), Education Abstracts, PsycINFO, Journal Storage (JSTOR), Digital Dissertations, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. A general electronic search of the Colorado State University Libraries, Google Scholar and Prospector were also conducted.

A number of search terms were tried to determine which ones produced studies of interest. The following terms proved to be the most successful and were used in each of the above databases alone or in various combinations: higher education, small colleges, private colleges, liberal arts colleges, religious colleges, turnaround, revitalization, transformation, viability, institutional change, renewal, transformation, and change.

In addition to electronic searches, the reference lists and literature reviews of relevant studies were reviewed for authors and citations. Specific articles were tracked down and database searches by author name(s) that were seen frequently in the literature were conducted.

These efforts found 33 studies that met the criteria for inclusion. Since some of these were collective case studies of more than one college a total of 45 institutions were used for the final analysis.

Data Collection

The primary studies found in the above procedure became the data for this analysis. The studies ranged from relative short journal articles to 200 page dissertations. To consolidate the data in a format that could be more easily used and analyzed, each article was read and relevant data extracted into a summary form which included a variable list (Appendix A). The summary form was an expanded adaptation of Miles and Huberman's (1994) document summary form suggested as a practical way to clarify and simplify various types of documents. The coding process also assured that each study was examined consistently in light of the same variables (Kulik & Kulik, 1989). The summary form was pilot tested using a dissertation that included case studies of three different institutions. Although some fine tuning was necessary the general format worked well.

After the development of the summary form, it was discovered that the qualitative data analysis software QSR NVIVO 7© could replace part of the form. Electronic copies of the cases and journal articles were loaded into NVIVO. As the cases were read, sentences and paragraphs relevant to each variable could be highlighted and dragged into a folder. The folder names corresponded to the variable list from the summary sheet. This process allowed for more robust coding since the ideas from the case did not have to be summarized and retyped into the form. The coded information could be left in the primary researchers own words and more surrounding detail could be included. This process was ultimately used in all but a few cases where electronic copies were not available.

The literature review and the pilot testing identified the variables used in the coding. Two lists of variables were identified and divided into groups: decline variables and revitalization variables. Decline variables were those circumstances and symptoms that the author of the primary study associated with the state of decline. There were 15 of these variables.

- Mission/Vision/Goals D
- Planning D
- Leadership D
- Financial Issues D
- Endowment D
- Faculty/Staff Salaries D
- Layoffs D
- Deferred Maintenance D
- Enrollment/Selectivity D
- Student Issues D
- Faculty/Staff Morale/Turnover/Relationships D:
- Alumni D
- External D
- Academic Programs D
- Extracurricular Programs D

Revitalization variables were those activities, events, actions, and interventions the primary study author gave credit to as being part of the revitalization process. There were 19 of these variables.

- Mission/Vision/Goals R
- Leadership R
- Leadership Style R
- Role of Trustees R
- Planning Processes R
- Culture Change R
- Cataclysmic Events R
- Operational Effectiveness R
- Influx of Financial Resources R
- Financial Risks R
- Fiscal Responsibility R
- Financial Aid Initiatives R
- Enrollment/Selectivity R

- Student Issues R
- Faculty/Staff Morale/Turnover/Relationships R
- Extracurricular Programmatic Changes R
- Academic Programmatic Changes R
- Alumni R
- External R

When the case study identified a particular event or activity, that event was identified on the summary sheet or coded in NVIVO under the appropriate variable. For instance, if a college added a new academic major as part of their revitalization as much information as available about the new major was recorded under the revitalization variable "Academic Program Changes R". If a particular variable was not mentioned in a case, that variable was left blank.

The rest of the summary form provided space for recording basic information about the study and the institution. These sections allowed for analysis based on the general characteristics of the school and the research study. Characteristics of the college at the time of the original research such as size, type and location were included. If the primary study identified the institution's name, it was recorded. If the study was anonymous, the pseudonym used by the original author was maintained. The summary sheet also included current information about the college. This information was gathered from publicly available data from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and from the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This allowed analysis of the college based on current conditions as well as conditions at the time of the study. These two sections were completed for all cases. This information was entered into NVIVO as "attributes" of the colleges.

Data Analysis

In a meta-study, the next step is "meta-data-analysis" (Paterson et al., 2001; Zhao, 1991). It is not the processing of raw data as is typical in research; rather it is the processing of the results of previously processed data. It is a "synthesis of the findings of a range of research studies" (Zhao, 1991, p. 378-379).

Coding Data

Coding is the process of assigning labels or tags to data so that chunks of related data can be pulled out, separated, organized, and analyzed. Sorting information from the cases into the decline and revitalization variables identified above was the first step in the coding process. This categorizing and coding is part of what Miles and Huberman (1994) include in the data reduction stage of research. They indicate that this process is not separate from the analysis process and that the decisions about what data to code and how to label and subcategorize are actually analytic choices.

The variables in the first layer of coding were called "tree nodes" in NVIVO terminology. Because these codes were predetermined these variables were considered deductive in nature. After the first layer of coding was complete, sub-categories of the variables were developed as needed. Although general areas of decline and revitalization could be identified prior to the study, the specifics of how they would play out were not obvious and needed to be defined as the project proceeded. It is legitimate to allow sub codes and categories to take shape as the process goes along (Shank, 2006). This more inductive approach was also suggested as a possibility by Miles and Huberman (1994).

An example of this process would be the revitalization variable "Fiscal

Responsibility R". It was determined ahead of time that there would undoubtedly be actions undertaken by the colleges that would demonstrate attention to fiscal restraint so this was included as a revitalization variable. After the first layer of coding was complete, this variable was examined in closer detail and the citations coded under this variable were further subdivided into "Spending Cuts," "Layoffs and Salary Freezes," "Eliminating Debt," and "Budget Processes" as these emerged as the most common approaches to fiscal responsibility.

Analyzing Data

Finding and creating codes in this manner can be called "thematic analysis" and results in a process of creating patterns from the data. As patterns develop, the researcher begins to ask questions and explore relationships. Themes evolve as the researcher explores new threads of questioning, makes observations, recognizes relationships, and fits categories together (Shank, 2006, p.148).

The analytical features of the software allowed for a rich variety of this type of emergent analysis. Any of the variables could be analyzed as a whole or based on any organizational characteristic. For instance, the revitalization variable "Enrollment R" was evaluated as a whole. The most basic question in this scenario asked what percentage of the schools studied made efforts to increase enrollments. The next question asked is what kinds of things they did to increase enrollment and were these activities internal to the admissions office or were they campus wide endeavors.

Other than the initial research questions the types of questions asked and answered by the above type of analysis were not predetermined. Some questions and issues emerged from the literature review and these were used as a starting point for the analysis. Beyond that, the research was conducted as an emergent design. As relationships emerged, themes and patterns evolved, and ideas germinated, they were explored using the data.

This analysis strategy was a variable oriented approach in which the details of the cases receded into the patterns and themes of the variables, as opposed to a case oriented approach which analyzes each whole case as a separate entity. The variable oriented analysis deals in generalities and is effective in finding the likely relationships among variables although it is less adept at establishing causality or complexities (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 174). Given the large number of cases and the extremely large number of variables and sub-variables, the variable oriented approach was appropriate for this study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the testing of consistency. There was the possibility of change over time in the researcher's process of coding. There was also the possibility that ideas could emerge later in the process that were not there at the beginning. To test for this possibility a code/recode procedure was used. Three primary studies were read twice, several months between readings. The summary sheets of the two readings were compared. There was 94% agreement rate between the two readings.

A final check on reliability was a research log that recorded questions and dilemmas as they emerged. Continually referencing this log reminded the researcher of the thought processes that had occurred throughout the study.

Validity asks if the summary sheet represents a correct interpretation of the information being sought. Measuring validity in a meta-study asks to what extent the outcomes would be recognizable to the original authors of the primary data studies (Jenson & Allen, 1996). Using this definition, conclusions about each case study were compared with the conclusions and recommendations made by the study authors themselves. In some cases, this comparison resulted in a rereading or re-review of the primary study. Making certain that the list of variables matched those discussed by the author was a check on internal validity.

Generalizability or external validity of the study is strong. That is the nature of the meta-study methodology and was one key reason for choosing this design. Jenson and Allen (1996) suggest that another check for external validity is the extent to which the variables that emerged from the analysis compare with theory in the literature. This proved to be an interesting endeavor because in some cases the literature review revealed inconsistent and contradictory advice. This research helped to clarify the literature rather than the other way around.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the meta-study methodology is the reliance of the meta-researcher upon the interpretations of the primary researcher. This limitation is of particular concern in a meta-study that uses case studies as primary data since case studies already include a fair amount of interpretation. The many levels of interpretation translate into many opportunities for misunderstanding.

Another issue is the lack of standard definitions for most of the constructs and variables. Even the construct of "decline" is not easily defined as noted earlier in the literature review. A college that the primary study author declares as "in decline" might be considered healthy by another definition. Likewise the construct of revitalization is similarly nebulous. While one author might declare their college "revitalized," others might find it still to be in questionable circumstances.

Finally, there was no attempt to eliminate colleges whose "revitalization" condition may not have lasted. At least one college in the study is now closed. Was there something wrong with the revitalization process? Or was it the right process but at the wrong time? Did other factors intervene?

The decision was made not to exclude any study on the basis of the college's current condition. First, to do so would inordinately impact schools that went through decline and revitalization earlier in the 25 year time period since they have had more time for intervening factors to affect their condition. Schools with recent turnarounds have not had as much time to revert back into decline. The effect would be the elimination of older studies with the findings favoring more recent ones without any assurance that the more recent revitalization processes were really any better. Furthermore, there is no way to know if the revitalization process really did not work. There may have been unrelated intervening events that had nothing to do with the revitalization process that impacted the current condition.

Despite the limitations of the study, there is much to be learned from the experience of small, private colleges that have undergone a change process. Examining in depth case studies of these colleges provided a unique way to synthesize their experiences and create a new and useful understanding of small college revitalization.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Three research questions were analyzed in this study of small college turnaround. This section will provide an analysis of each question. Prior to the analysis an overview of the colleges studied and a summary of their experiences may be useful.

Profile of the Colleges

As a meta-study the intention of this research was to find all available revitalization case studies of small, private colleges. Specific criteria for both the study itself and the type of college were established in the methodology section of this paper. The search produced appropriate case studies of 45 revitalized small colleges. The colleges are listed in Appendix B. Fourteen of the colleges were given a pseudonym by the primary author. To respect the college's desire for anonymity no attempt was made to identify any of these 14 colleges.

The 31 identifiable colleges were profiled using current, publicly available information from Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching web-sites. No colleges were excluded from the study on the basis of their current status. To do so would involve making a judgment about what subsequently went wrong and when. If the primary author at the time of the study believed that the college had turned around, the college was accepted into the study. Of the known colleges in the study, only one college has closed. Bradford College's revitalization process was the subject of at least 3 studies in the 1980s, but it closed in 2000. Beyond that, the known colleges are still functioning and most of them are continuing to grow. Given that at least 29 of the colleges considered closure at some point, the overall health of the group is very strong.

Tables 4 through 12 highlight current information about the known colleges. The information gathered was the most current available as of May 2008. Although there are 31 known colleges, due to Bradford's closing many of the tables total to 30. It should also be noted that some of the colleges do not appear to meet the inclusion criteria of the study. This is because the changes that occurred during or after the revitalization process changed the college, sometimes significantly.

Table 4

Type of Colleges in the Meta-Study

Type	Frequency
Denominational	20
Historically women	3
Currently women	2
Historically Black	2

Table 5

Selectivity of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Selectivity	Frequency
Inclusive	4
Selective	19
More selective	6

Table 6

Basic Classification of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Carnegie classification	Frequency
Baccalaureate arts & sciences	7
Baccalaureate diverse fields	8
Master's (small)	2
Master's (medium)	8
Master's (large)	4
Research Universities	1

Table 7

Student Status of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Student status	Frequency
Full-time 4 year	22
Medium full-time 4 year	7
Part-time 4 year	1

Table 8

Curriculum Focus of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Curriculum	Frequency
Primarily arts & sciences	9
Balanced professional and arts & sciences	8
Primarily professional	13

Table 9

Current Enrollment of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Enrollment	Frequency
Very small (fewer than 1000 degree seeking undergraduates)	7
Small (1000 – 2999 degree seeking undergraduates)	18
Medium (3,000 – 9,999 degree seeking undergraduates)	4
Large (at least 10,000 degree seeking undergraduates)	1

Table 10

Residential Status of Colleges in the Meta-Study (Carnegie Classification System)

Residential status	Frequency
Highly residential	15
Primarily residential	11
Primarily non-residential	4

Table 11

Location of Colleges in the Meta-Study (IPEDS)

Location	Frequency
City	11
Town	11
Suburb	5
Rural	4

Table 12

2006-2007 Tuition, Room and Board of Colleges in the Meta-Study (IPEDS)

Cost	Frequency
$15,000 - $19,999	2
$20,000 - $24,999	2
$25,000 - $29,999	8
$30,000 – 34,999	10
$35,000 – 39,000	5
$40,000 +	3

Much less is known about the 14 anonymous colleges. At least 12 of them are or were denominational; one is historically a women's college; and another is currently a women's college. Although some of the case studies of these colleges provide information that could be used to ascertain additional knowledge about the schools, the information is sporadic and comes from different time frames. It was determined that using such information was questionable and it would be better to exclude these colleges from any analysis that includes demographic information.

Executive Summary

The 45 colleges in this meta-study provide examples and inspiration for other colleges. The process did not happen quickly or easily and there was no magic formula for revitalization, but an overview of the experiences of these colleges can provide a good starting point for analysis.

Initially, many constituencies on these campuses were unaware their college was in trouble. This was a result of poor communication and a breakdown of governance. So, the first step for many of these colleges was to come to grips with the true state of the college and to share that information to the college community. Most of the time awareness of the crisis resulted in a change of presidents, or in some cases it was a new president that discovered the crisis. From there, stabilizing the financial situation became the top priority, particularly when the crisis was life threatening. Bringing in new funds and new students was the top priority for most of these colleges and activities designed to do so were the most common activities found in the study.

Beyond these common starting points, the sequence of events used by the colleges did not follow a particular pattern. In fact, the overall process for the group was haphazard and random. Some colleges were able to engage in a well thought out step by step change process. These colleges wrote new missions or renewed their commitment to an existing mission. They created recovery plans, strategic plans, and budget plans and then took action in an orderly fashion based on the plans. Other colleges just jumped in and started doing things. For them, it was a matter of trying things until something started working. For these colleges action came first, thought and planning came later, if at all. In still other cases, action and planning were pursued simultaneously.

Leadership style and governance during the recovery process were not consistent either. Often taking quick action required an autocratic, no nonsense leader. Other leaders came in as healers – nurturing and open with a participative leadership style. Governance structures received attention at many of the colleges, but again there was no consistent approach. Some colleges were redesigned to function more like a business, using the corporate world as a model. Other colleges recommitted to a more traditional academic governance system that included more shared governance and a larger decision making role for faculty. The key to success for any governance process was agreement on the process and willingness of all constituencies to buy into it and abide by it.

Despite the differences in timeline, leadership style, and governance, there were some commonalities in the experiences of the colleges. Most of the colleges needed to broaden their mission or expand their prospective student base to survive. In the course of decline, their programs had been cut drastically or become less relevant. Adding new programs that appealed to a wider group of students was a necessity. Cutting academic programs without also adding new ones was almost never a solution.

Cutting budgets was rarely a solution either. The colleges paid close attention to their budgets during revitalization. They developed new budgeting processes that increased accountability and oversight; they also looked for cost savings which sometimes included layoffs and retrenchment. But few of the colleges stopped there. The key to revitalization was bringing in new sources of funds so they could have the money for new programs and new initiatives. Bringing in new funds was the most frequent revitalization activity for these 45 colleges.

Increasing enrollment was the other common focus for the colleges. The Admissions Office and its traditional recruiting activities were part of the effort to increase enrollment. But, the colleges were just as likely to affect enrollment by efforts outside of admissions office. Expanding the mission or adding academic programs are prime examples. They also paid attention to image. Because they had been experiencing deferred maintenance, they put money into their physical plant. Image was also enhanced through name changes and increased involvement with their community or church sponsor.

Finally, it should be noted that revitalization was a process that required creativity. These colleges were able to find and take advantage of opportunities and partnerships that were unique to their particular situation. There was no formula for this, but they were able to seek out opportunities and know how to make the most of them. There was a sense of risk taking and entrepreneurship.

Credit for the revitalization was often given to the turnaround president, but an often cited strength of the president was his or her ability to find and develop good leadership. This included administrative leadership, faculty leadership and trustee leadership. Trustees were very involved in the revitalization process by contributing more expertise, time and money than they had in the past. The entire institution was involved in revitalization.

Revitalization was not easy. The colleges had struggles along the way. People involved expended an enormous amount of energy. There was very little financial reward and many people lost jobs or left voluntarily. Some of the activities undertaken were controversial. There was concern the colleges sold out to the market instead of providing for the common good of society. Furthermore, some colleges continued to be concerned they were not completely out of danger even after the case study author declared that revitalization had occurred. Nevertheless, there was a sense of pride and relief when a college pulled back from the brink of decline or closure.

Research Question 1

Three research questions were established for this study. The first research question asked which variables for decline and for revitalization occur most frequently in an analysis of case studies of small, private colleges that have experienced decline and revitalization. To answer this question, the primary studies were read and coded into variables representing areas of decline and revitalization. After coding, the variables were counted to established frequency. It must be noted that the primary studies themselves had varying degrees of detail. Some of the more comprehensive case studies discussed numerous issues relating to the college being studied so these studies had large numbers of variables. Conversely, the smaller studies only focused on a few key factors the author considered the primary components of the change. These studies had a much smaller number of variables. Nevertheless, the analysis provides an interesting starting point for an understanding of what happened at these colleges.

Decline Variables

Although the focus of this research was on the revitalization process, the primary study authors needed to defend their contention that the institutions they studied had been in a state of decline prior to recovery. Therefore, all of the studies made some mention of the condition of the college prior to the revitalization process. These comments were coded into decline variables. The primary authors rarely made any attempt to determine if these decline variables were symptoms or causes of the decline; they were simply descriptions of the college as it existed. Table 13 provides an overview of the frequency of the decline variables. In a few cases the decline variables were further divided into sub-variables.

Table 13

Frequency of Decline Variables

Variables and Sub-Variables	Frequency	Frequency
Financial Issues	44	
Deficits		27
Debt		19
Minimal Endowment		18
Enrollment	43	
Declining Numbers		36
Declining Student Quality		13
Leadership Problems	34	
Faculty and Staff Morale	30	
External Problems	27	
Deferred Maintenance	22	
Low or Frozen Faculty and Staff Salaries	21	
Mission/Values/Goals	21	
Academic Programs	16	
Student Issues	15	

N= 45

Finances and Enrollment

The overwhelming consensus was that decline was manifested in the areas of finances and enrollment. All but one of the 45 colleges mentioned some aspect of the financial condition of the college as evidence the college was in decline. All but two college mentioned enrollment concerns.

A variety of financial problems were coded under the "Financial Issues" variable. The most commonly discussed financial problem was the lack of a balanced budget, with

27 colleges facing deficits. Nineteen colleges were concerned about their debt level and borrowing. Thirteen colleges reported facing both debt and deficits. Furthermore, 18 colleges indicated they had little or no endowment and several of those that did have some endowment were dipping into it to cover operating deficits.

Many of the smaller primary studies said very little beyond stating the fact that deficits or debt existed. However, when the primary author provided detail about how the college ended up in financial trouble, the largest reason was the lack of budget oversight or planning. Thirteen studies found some element of the budget process was either deliberately hidden or simply ignored.

Many small, private colleges are highly tuition dependent. Tuition dependence is a relationship that ties together financial issues and enrollment problems. When the budget depends heavily upon funds from tuition, a drop in enrollment means a smaller budget. When this enrollment drop is unplanned or unexpected, the result is an immediate budget shortfall. This shortfall has to be met by borrowing, budget cutting, or dipping into the endowment, all of which were cited as tactics used by the schools in the study.

It is not surprising then, that "Enrollment" was also cited almost unanimously as a decline variable. Enrollment decreased at 36 colleges and was stagnant at one more. Thirteen colleges were concerned about declining student quality. When the number of applicants decreased, the colleges faced a choice between accepting fewer students or accepting less qualified students. Accepting fewer students meant an immediate budget shortfall. But, allowing for a decline in student quality made it harder to attract good students in the future. It also affected faculty morale and student success.

Most of the primary studies did not make an attempt to explain the causes of the declining enrollment. That particular issue has been explored extensively in the literature and is outside the scope of this research. However, of those studies that did try to establish a cause of the enrollment decline, most cited external and demographic reasons such as fewer high school graduates, competition from other colleges, or declining interest in the majors offered by that school. Internally, the primary causes were attributed to the problems in the admissions offices and financial aid policies.

Leadership

"Leadership" emerged as the next largest decline variable. Although the specifics of the leadership problems varied by school, an overall picture of dramatic leadership dysfunction emerged from the research. In the 34 studies that discussed the leadership variable, there was an overwhelming sense of lack of communication, lack of teamwork, distrust and disinterest. The picture also reflected a complete breakdown of shared governance that resulted in tensions and animosity throughout the organization.

In 1966 and 1967, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) each endorsed the *Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities.* The Statement was "directed to governing board members, administrators, faculty members, students, and other persons in the belief that the colleges and universities of the United States have reached a stage calling for appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among the components of the academic institution" (AAUP, 2008). Each of the primary leadership components of the colleges was given specific areas of responsibility. In internal operational areas such as planning, budgeting, communicating, and allocating resources college communities are encouraged to work together using "joint effort".

In contrast to an orderly distribution of responsibly outlined in the *Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities*, these colleges had breakdowns at one or more levels of authority. For instance, the trustees of many of the colleges studied were presented as either disinterested or uninformed about what was happening in their institutions. Boards were "not inquisitive" and reluctant to "ask questions". Board meetings at one institution were described as "social events" (Hayes III, 2003, p.125). At Drexel University blame for the decline was laid squarely at the feet of the board. "The story of the decline of Drexel University is first and foremost a story of the failure of corporate governance, albeit in the non-profit sector. While this may seem a harsh judgment, the Board in any corporation must be accountable for the direction and ultimate success of the institution" (Paul, 2004, p. 322).

The presidents were routinely described as either "autocratic" or conversely as "laissez-faire" with the two extremes showing up equally among the colleges studied. The autocratic or iron hand leadership style alienated faculty and sometimes even intimated the board. This was often the source of relationship problems on campus and affected faculty and staff morale. The laissez-faire leadership style was less divisive but resulted in lax decision making and poor management. In particular, the laissez-faire leadership style tended to ignore or not deal with financial problems. One primary author described the "boiled frog" syndrome. This was a reference to the story that claims that a frog will not jump out of a pot of water brought to a boil slowly; instead the frog will sit in the water until it cooks (Wilch, 1998). The metaphor makes the point that it is possible for the leadership to ignore signs of trouble if those signs happen slowly over time and it aptly describes what happens when the laissez-faire leadership style goes unchallenged for too long. (Apparently, the story of the frog is untrue but that was outside of the scope of this research so this claim was not tested!)

Faculty seemed to be left out of the leadership loop altogether; at least they were not mentioned often in the discussion of campus leadership. Administrators other than the president were also rarely mentioned as part of the discussion of the decline.

Faculty and Staff Morale

Faculty and staff were not absent from the research however. Thirty of the primary authors found faculty and staff morale issues important enough to mention as part of their description of the decline. Furthermore, the language the primary authors used to discuss the topic was highly emotional. The adjectives used to describe faculty attitudes included words such as scared, depressed, alienated, frustrated, anxious, confused, demoralized, tense, disgruntled, helpless, cynical, and mistrustful. This negativity stemmed primarily from unhealthy relationships on campus. Relationships were most often strained between faculty and administration, but there were also tensions between various factions of faculty. The language used to describe these relationships was intense, this time with violent and military metaphors. The campus was "at war". There were "revolts" and "in-fighting" with people "at each other's throats". Relationships experienced a "complete breakdown". Campuses were described as being in "turmoil" or "toxic". These strong negative descriptions of the campus climate add to the picture of leadership dysfunction at these colleges.

External Problems

The "External" decline variable referred to problems that manifested themselves outside of the campus. Eleven colleges cited strained relationships with their community or their church sponsor. Nine colleges reported having a bad reputation or experiencing negative media publicity. Three colleges reported accreditation problems.

Deferred Maintenance

One common technique for balancing a tight college budget is to defer maintenance. When deferred maintenance continues for too long, it becomes evident to the casual observer. One half of the colleges had reached the point that descriptions like "shabby buildings" or "dilapidated facilities" were used to describe their campuses. In a few extreme cases campus buildings had been closed or condemned.

Faculty and Staff Salaries and Layoffs

Twenty one studies reported that the institutions paid well below average, or had experienced recent salary cuts or freezes. Ten of these schools experienced layoffs as part of their financial difficulties.

Mission/Values

In Cowan's (1993) study of college turnaround, she found that the "critical strategic problem of these colleges was in every case murkiness as to purpose" (p. 31). Twenty one of the primary authors identified some aspect of mission or values as a decline variable. Mission drift or the lack of mission was an issue at 13 colleges. In nine cases, the college had a mission, but there was tension between the mission and the market place.

Other Decline Variables

Other aspects of the state of decline experienced by these colleges emerged from the research. However, very little else was expressed more than a handful of times. Academic issues included having too many academic programs or not planning new programs well. Some authors saw cutting academic programs as a symptom of decline, others saw adding programs without planning as reflective of decline. Program quality was called into question. Student dissatisfaction, lack of student activities, and a lack of student focus were also mentioned.

A Decline Model

The decline variables do not exist in isolation from each other. The relationship between deferred maintenance and enrollment is a good example. The result of deferred maintenance is a shabby campus. A shabby campus is less appealing to prospective students, which affects enrollment. Lower enrollment means less tuition money which means maintenance must be further delayed. The campus continues to get shabbier and more prospective students are turned off. This results in a cycle in which the decline of one variable accelerates the decline of another variable.

Figure 6 illustrates a series of similar cycles that work the same way. In the center of the figure are the overlapping issues of finances and enrollment. These two issues are the bottom line for small, private colleges. When the colleges are not healthy, money and student count are at the center of the decline. They overlap because of the tuition dependent nature of the colleges.

Around the center are a series of cycles. Each cycle represents areas that can affect finances or enrollment. Like the deferred maintenance example, they share the

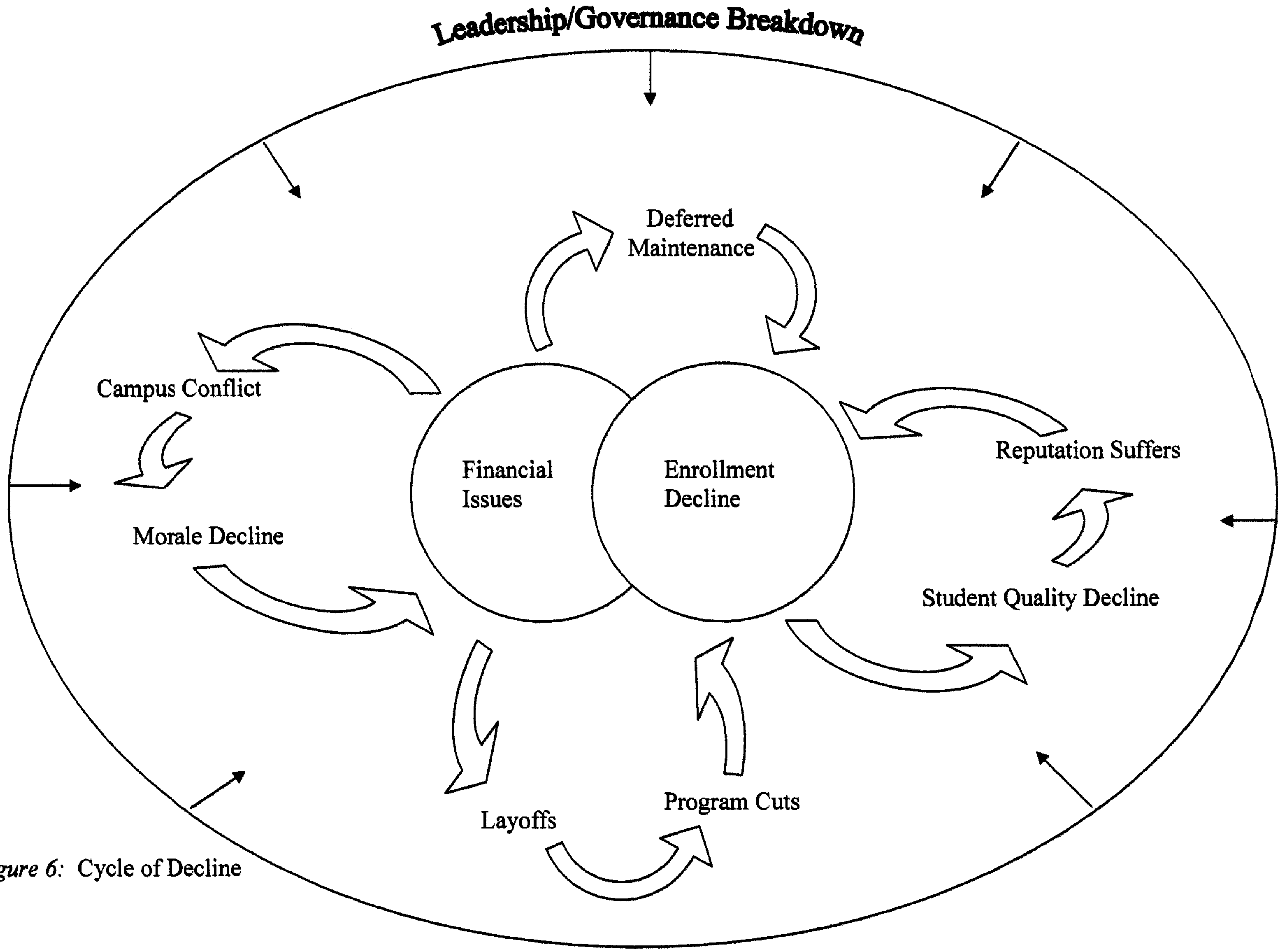

Figure 6: Cycle of Decline

characteristic of driving each other forward. Once a college gets started in a cycle, it can find it difficult to get out. Eventually, these cycles have some kind of effect on either finances or enrollment. Once those areas are affected, they perpetuate the cycle and can introduce new cycles. One appeal of using a circular illustration for this process is the lack of a beginning or ending. Although some colleges tried to point to events or situations that might have exacerbated their problems, the truth is that the colleges really did not seem to know when, where, or how the process of decline got started. Demographics were often blamed as the starting point for enrollment decline, but demographics do not explain why similar colleges during the same time period grew and thrived. Cowen (1993) uncovered a phenomenon she called "problem-blindness" that can infect a college for years before it is noticed. This research supports the existence of this phenomenon. The result is that a college can be deeply entrenched in these cycles before it is even fully aware of what is happening. By the time decline is acknowledged, any attempt to figure out when and where it started would be futile. Once a cycle begins, it can only continue in the direction is it going. Much like a "catch 22" there is no obvious way out.

Surrounding the entire process is the breakdown in leadership and governance. This breakdown serves as a barrier that surrounds the problems of the college and holds the cycles in place. Until something breaks the system apart the cycles will continue to perpetuate themselves until the college is at the point of crisis. This is the point at which the revitalization process began for most of the colleges in this study.

Revitalization

The variables reflecting the state of decline provide insight into the issues facing these small colleges. The resulting "Cycle of Decline" model illustrates how these variables entrench a college in cycles of continuous decline. But the successes of the colleges in this study indicate the cycles can be reversed. To learn more about how the turnaround happened, the primary studies were read and variables that were mentioned as part of the revitalization process were identified and coded. These variables are simply descriptions of things the schools did. There is no way to know to what extent any particular activity helped or hindered the ultimate revitalization outcome.

Table 14 provides an overview of the frequency of the revitalization variables. The initial variables were identified ahead of time and were deductive in nature. They are extremely broad and could almost be considered "themes" instead of variables; furthermore, they do not provide any real specific knowledge of what happened at these colleges. For instance adding a new major, eliminating a dozen majors, or simply changing the core curriculum all ended up under the "Academic Programs" variable. Consequently, the frequency of the variable "Academic Programs" provides information about the importance of the academic program, but it does not give any insight into what specific changes the colleges generally made. To make the variables more useful, a second level of coding sub-divided the variables into more precise categories such as "adding academic programs" versus "eliminating academic programs". These sub-variables were inductive; they were identified as the process of coding proceeded. The frequency of the sub-variables is ultimately the more useful information. This process

Table 14

Frequency of Revitalization Variables

Variable (Theme)	Sub-Variables	Frequency	Frequency
Leadership		44	
	New President		27
	Non-Presidential Leadership		27
	Open Communication Style		20
	Other Personality Characteristics		20
	Management Skills		19
	Redefinition of Shared Governance		18
	Interpersonal Skills – Nurturer		14
	Entrepreneur – Risk Taker		12
	Fund Raising Skills		11
	Empowerment Skills		6
Academic Program Changes		42	
	Programs Added		19
	Both Added and Eliminated		13
	Programs Eliminated		3
Financial Resources		41	
	Gifts/Endowment/Fund Raising/Campaigns		36
	Grants/Foundation Gifts		13
	Development Office Staffing		5
Fiscal Responsibility		41	
	Spending Cuts		25
	Budget Process		23
	Eliminating Debt		17
	Layoffs/Salary Freeze/Benefit Cuts		17
Mission/Vision		40	
	New or Reexamined Mission		24
	Importance of Shared Vision		17
Enrollment		39	
	Activities External to Admissions Office		31
	Activities Internal to Admissions Office		29
	Admissions Office Staffing		23
Planning		36	
	Strategic Planning		26
	Other Planning		25
Trustees		36	
	Change in Level of Involvement		16
	Change in Membership		16
	Source of Funds		15

Table 14 (con't)

Frequency of Revitalization Variables

Variable (Theme)	Sub-Variables	Frequency	Frequency
External		35	
	Community Relationship		18
	Collaborations/Mergers/Partnership		14
	Reputation/Media		11
	Church Relationship		9
Student Issues		35	
	Improved Student Life		15
	Creation of a Student Focus		10
	Retention Efforts		10
Culture Change		34	
	Attention to the Change Process		24
	Recognition of the Need for Change		16
	Symbolic Change Efforts		14
Faculty/Staff Morale and Development		34	
	Morale Positive or Increasing		19
	Faculty Development		12
	Morale Negative or Decreasing		7
Spending/Building/ Financial Risks		33	
	Physical Plant/Building		25
	Raises and Hiring		14
Operational Effectiveness		24	
Alumni		19	
Financial Aid		18	
	Strategic Use of Financial Aid/Tuition Discounting		14
	Scholarships/Merit Aid		7

N= 45

ended up being much like the template analysis process (University of Huddersfield, 2007).

Table 14 organizes the deductive variables (or themes) based on frequency with the inductive sub-variables coded under each theme. Table 15 reformats the same material by frequency of sub-variables. For the most part, the sub-variables in Table 15 were taken straight from Table 14, but a few slight adjustments in categories made the list more meaningful. This format provides a more useful understanding of what actually happened at the revitalized colleges because it gives a better overview of the importance of specific activities. A detailed description and analysis of each variable is found in the discussion of research question two.

Bringing in money from gifts and grants was the most frequently mentioned factor in revitalization. Adding academic programs was the second most frequent undertaking in the revitalization process. Focusing on enrollment was next with activities outside of the admissions office equally important as those within the traditional realm of admissions. A new president rounded out the top five most common factors. The second tier of activities include activities related to spending cuts, planning, mission, physical plant, and budget processes. Trustee involvement, symbolic or cultural issues, relations with the community, and some specific presidential characteristics were next in frequency. Some of the least commonly mentioned sub-variables include enhancing reputation, student focus, church relationship, and the use of scholarships. Eliminating academic programs without also adding new programs was the least utilized technique.

Table 15

Frequency of Revitalization Sub-Variables in Descending Order

Sub-Variables	Frequency
Gifts/Endowment/Fund Raising/Campaigns/Grants	37
Added New Academic Programs	32
Enrollment Activities External to Admissions Office	31
Enrollment Activities Internal to Admissions Office	29
New President	27
Non-Presidential Leadership	27
Strategic Planning	26
Spending Cuts	25
Physical Plant/Building	25
Other Planning	25
New or Reexamined Mission	24
Attention to the Culture Change Process	24
Operational Effectiveness	24
Improved the Budget Process	23
Admissions Office Staffing	23
President with an Open Communication Style	20
President with Management Skills	19
Faculty Morale Positive or Increasing	19
Alumni Involvement	19
Redefinition of Shared Governance	18
Community Relationships	18
Financial Aid Initiatives	18
Importance of Shared Vision	17
Eliminating Debt	17
Layoffs/Salary Freezes/Benefit Cuts	17
Trustees Change in Level of Involvement	16
Change in Trustee Membership	16
Recognition of the Need for Change	16
Trustees as Source of Funds	15
Improved Student Life	15
Symbolic Change Efforts	14
Presidential Interpersonal Skills – Nurturer	14
Collaborations/Mergers/Partnerships	14
Raises and Hiring	14
Strategic Use of Financial Aid/Tuition Discounting	14
President as Entrepreneur – Risk Taker	12
Faculty Development	12
Presidential Fund Raising Skills	11
Reputation/Media	11
Creation of a Student Focus	10
Retention Efforts	10

Enhanced Church Relationship	9
Faculty Morale Negative or Decreasing	7
Scholarships/Merit Aid	7
Presidential Empowerment of Others	6
Development Office Staffing	5
Academic Programs Eliminated Without New Additions	3

N= 45

Summary Coding

One additional coding process was used to gain further clarification. Some of the primary studies were much more detailed than others so there was inconsistency regarding the number of variables from each study. To equalize the studies a final coding of the "summaries" was completed. Each study was reviewed for a summary statement or concluding paragraphs. They generally focused on 3-7 factors that the primary authors saw as the most important for the revitalization process. These summary statements were then coded and counted providing insight into the most important elements of revitalization. Table 16 summarizes these statements.

There are some interesting similarities and differences between Tables 15 and 16. The importance of bringing in money, adding new academic programs, and the role of the president are confirmed by the summary coding. There was a dramatic increase in the importance of a new or reexamined mission statement and an increase in importance of budget processes. The Board of Trustees also saw its importance increase. The other really major difference is a dramatic drop in the importance of operational efficiency. Cost cutting, and new building remain in similar positions; the admissions offices and planning appear to be slightly less important in the summary coding.

Table 16

Frequency of Summary Variables in Descending Order

Summary Variables	Frequency
Gifts/Endowment/Fund Raising	26
New or Reexamined Mission	23
Added New Academic Programs	19
President	16
Spending Cuts/Freezes	15
Budget Processes	14
Board of Trustees	12
Physical Plant/Building	11
Activities Internal to the Admissions Office	10
Planning	10
Academic Reorganization	9
Partnerships/Collaborations	9
Non-Presidential Leadership	7
Alumni	6
Name Change	6
Communicating the Crisis Openly	5
Faculty Development	5
Church Relationship	4
Governance	4
Operational Effectiveness	4
Student Focus	3
Financial Aid/Scholarships	3
Going Co-ed	3

N= 43

The frequency analysis conducted for the first research question clearly indicates that bringing in money and students is the most frequent and most important part of the revitalization process. Adding new academic programs is the primary technique for brining in new students. Issues of mission, planning, and leadership cluster together as the next priority. A multiplicity of other diverse techniques concludes the list.

Research Question 2

The first research question was about variable frequency. The second research question asked if patterns and themes emerge from analyses of the variables. This is an attempt to begin to explore what is really happening and what the variables mean in the revitalization process. A deeper exploration of the variables and sub-variables should provide some insight into this question. This discussion is organized by the first level variables (or themes) as they appear in Table 14.

Leadership

Much has been written about the importance of leadership in an organizational turnaround; therefore, it is not surprising that all but one of the studies discussed the leadership of the colleges during the revitalization process. This variable examined the characteristics and management style of the president. However, the category was broad, so it had a large number of sub-variables.

New President

The largest leadership sub-category was on existence and role of a new president in the turnaround process. Twenty seven of the 45 colleges identified the beginning of the turnaround process with the coming of a new president who was clearly linked with the turnaround process. Not only was the turnaround associated with the hiring of a particular president, in 17 cases the new president was given extensive personal credit for the turnaround. "They give the current president strong personal credit for the recovery" (Chaffee, 1983, p. 179) or words to that effect emphasized the importance of the role of the president.

In Cowan's review of small colleges (1993) none of the colleges studied began their turnaround process until a new president came. "To make that difference the president does not have to be new. But in all of the successful turned-around colleges I encountered, the president was" (p. 34). MacTaggart (2007) also found all of the colleges in his study started the turnaround process with a new president. Contrary to these findings, this meta-study found colleges that turned-around without the benefit of a new president. Although 27 is a clear majority, is it significant that 18 colleges did not closely identify their turnaround with a new president.

In an attempt to find out more about these 18 colleges it was noted that seven of them were reviewed under pseudonyms. The authors of these studies may not have said much about the president of the college for fear it would identify the college itself. Several studies mentioned important characteristics of the president but gave no indication if the president was new or not. Others were long term studies that included the tenures of more than one president. In these cases, each president was given some credit for some aspects of the turnaround as well as given some blame for things that did not work. New England College credits an interim president with beginning the restoration process (Perkins, 2007). In at least one case the turnaround seemed to coincide with the hiring of a new president, but that person was barely mentioned and not given any credit for any aspect of the turnaround.

Only one case provided a detailed look at a single individual who was closely identified with both decline and revitalization. Sr. Carol at Chestnut Hill College initially supported the college's mission to remain a single sex institution. As the college declined she realized the college could no longer survive this way and presided over the switch to co-education which was the turning point for revitalization. She was described as undergoing a change in her leadership style over time. "As the individual with the most intimate knowledge of both the college's financial health and enrollment trends, and someone who had always embraced change, Sr. Carol was coming to terms with the level of change that would be necessary in order to maintain any sort of future viability" (Hagovsky, 2004, p. 41). She states she could no longer "turn a deaf ear" to the problems faced by the institution. She then began the journey to take the college co-ed and thereby revive the institution.

Sr. Carol's experience illustrates it is possible for the president of a declining or stagnant institution to recognize the need for change and implement a successful change process midway through their tenure. The cases that examined the tenures of several presidents also opened the possibility the turnaround process does not have to be carried out by a single individual but can be a gradual process that emerges through the combined efforts of more than one president. Nevertheless, for the majority of the colleges hiring the right individual at the right time was a key factor in revitalization.

Non-Presidential Leadership

The importance and role of non-presidential leadership emerged as equally important as the new president. Although the intent of the sub-variable was to ascertain the role of leaders other than the president, the focus ended up being on the ability of the president to identify and develop strong leadership, both in the administration and faculty. Presidents were praised for their hiring and leadership development skills. "One of Br. Bruce's strongest abilities was to surround himself with the right people. Over and over, interviewees repeated that the administrative team assembled by the new president was perceived as one that could take the College to the level at which it could function" (Thornton, 1999, p. 126). Another president "showed a knack for identifying a good idea and for recruiting exceptional talent" (Rooney, 2005, p. 108). In other cases, presidents showed skill at reorganizing and developing personnel. ". . . one associate described how she was given a full year to prepare for her position by visiting colleges, interviewing colleagues, attending professional development experiences, and studying current literature" (Franks, 2003, p. 87). Presidents were also cited for their ability to reorganize leadership structures and eliminate people if needed.

The strongest argument for the importance of non-presidential leadership showed up in an analysis of the recommendations provided by the authors of the primary studies. Many primary authors closed their studies with a list of recommendations for other colleges seeking revitalization. These recommendations were not included in the variable coding, but were examined separately. Advice regarding leadership was the most common theme of the recommendations, but much of this advice was not focused on the president. Instead, the advice related to the need for the involvement of other constituencies: faculty, trustees, and other administrators. The value of having qualified people in these roles and utilizing them appropriately is clear. "These cases illustrate, however, that it is a key function of formal leaders not just to shine as outstanding individuals, the 'heroes' who will lead the organization to the Promised Land; they must also awaken the leadership ability and coping skills of others, to bring about 'the release of human possibilities' " (Oakley, 1997, p. 182). A successful president, therefore, is one who can find and utilize talent and leadership skills in others.

Other Presidential Characteristics

"Communication" was the third most frequently mentioned leadership sub-variable. The communication variable was consistently associated with the word "open". The concepts of "open door", "open communication", and "open discussions" are repeated throughout the cases. The concept was applied even to sensitive issues such as the financial condition of college and the budgetary processes. Several colleges on the verge of closure reported that one of the first steps in revitalization was open discussion about the true state of the college. It was often this open communication that created an understanding of the need for change and a willingness to make those changes.

The "Other Personal Characteristics" category emerged as the fourth largest leadership sub-category. This seems like an unusually high ranking for an "other" category, but there were a large number of diverse presidential leadership characteristics that seemed important to the primary author, but were not mentioned enough times to warrant a separate sub-category. Different colleges valued different qualities in their presidents. Examples include personality descriptions like person of integrity, confident, relaxed, persuasive, workaholic, energetic, servant, hands-on, thoughtful, and devoted.

Interpersonal skills such as nurturing and caring were mentioned often enough to warrant a sub-category. This characteristic was often discussed in conjunction with the ability to unify the campus or heal relationships.

Business savvy and good management skills were also important leadership functions in the revitalization process. Strong financial knowledge and skills fall into this category, along with an emphasis on management, decision making skills, administrative skills, and a desire for accountability from others.

Peck (1985) has written about the importance of a small college leader being an entrepreneur. Twelve of the primary studies found this characteristic in the president. Presidents were willing to take risks, innovate, be aggressive, and think big. When describing their president, faculty and staff at Georgetown College "likened his approach to that of a shotgun where some of the bullets hit the target however many holes were actually made. Others used the analogy of a pinball machine whereby there is a great deal of sound, light and fury with multiple bouncing balls that sometimes results in a high score" (Rooney, 2005, p. 75).

Finally, the ability of the president to be a fund raiser was noted by 11 colleges. Six primary studies also specifically discussed the concept of the president's ability to empower others.

Academic Program Changes

The emergence of leadership as the most frequently discussed aspect of turnaround could easily have been predicted by anyone familiar with the research on revitalization and change. The second most frequently discussed revitalization variable has received less attention in the literature. However, this study found that making changes in the academic programs offered by the college was a key part of the turnaround strategy. Forty two of the primary studies discussed some aspect of academic program change. Adding academic program and majors was the most commonly mentioned strategy. In 19 cases academic programs were added. In 13 cases some academic programs were added while others were eliminated. Only in three cases did the primary author mention that programs were eliminated with no mention of any additions. One of these three was Bradford College, the only known school in this research that has closed.

The most frequent type of change made to the academic program was the addition of career oriented majors, both undergraduate and graduate. Many of these small colleges were historically liberal arts and sciences colleges. With the growing emphasis on education as a requirement for job preparation, these colleges found decreasing demand for a strictly liberal arts degree. Adding more career focused majors and graduate programs enhanced their appeal to prospective students. But a number of colleges struggled with the decision to stray from their liberal arts roots. In some cases the solution was to reaffirm liberal arts but add some other practical aspect to the curriculum such as internships or service learning. Tusculum College refocused their entire curriculum around a civic arts theme and created a campus wide program designed to foster the development of civic values.

The other major academic program changes came in the form of adult and continuing education programs. A number of the colleges found strong demand for education designed to meet the needs of less traditional students. Regis University is a particularly good example of how this strategy resulted in the complete reinvention of a college. In the mid 1970s Regis had less than 1000 students on a small residential campus in Denver, CO. In the late 1970s, under the guidance of a president with background in life-long learning, the college took its first tentative steps into adult education through off campus partnerships and degree completion programs. Quickly the college found it had identified a niche that would distinguish it from other colleges in the area. The growth in non-traditional programs was explosive and Regis soon became known for its non-traditional educational model. In 2008 Regis University had over 16,000 students on eight campuses as well as on-line. The original residential campus survives, but at 1400, its enrollment is a tiny faction of the total. Southern Wesleyan University took a similar (albeit smaller) approach with their LEAP program (Leadership Education for Adult Professionals). This program is credited as the catalyst for change that lifted them out of debt and onto firm financial footing (Wolfe, 2004, p. 89).

A final example of academic program changes involves the strategy of focusing on unique or unusual programs. The primary author of the study on the University of Findlay focused her study on the critical decisions that led to the revitalization of that institution. The decision to develop several key "niche" academic programs emerged as the most important decision made in the revitalization. Changing the mission from pure liberal arts to a blend of liberal arts and "niche" programs was the third most critical decision (Wilch, 1998, p. 54).

The common thread that appeared throughout the variable relating to academic program changes was need for these colleges to find programs that attract students. Although many colleges lamented the fact they were straying from their roots, it was often a matter of survival to respond to the needs of the market. Enrollment growth and the need to find programs that had marketing appeal were the catalysts that prompted these colleges to examine their curriculum and add programs.

Influx of Financial Resources

Lack of students and lack of money were the primary decline variables identified by this study. New academic programs address the lack of students. Fund raising addresses the lack of money. An influx of money was a crucial part of the revitalization process for forty one colleges.

The vast majority of the colleges (36) attributed an influx of financial resources to fund raising, building the endowment, gifts or other traditional development activities. This was the largest single sub-variable identified in the study. Twenty two of these implemented a specific "campaign". Thirteen colleges got new resources from grants or foundations. A handful of colleges sought grants or engaged in a campaign for the first time in recent memory. Although these activities are traditionally development office activities, the development office and staff themselves were only mentioned 5 times in the primary studies, usually in reference to hiring new staff or training existing staff.

There were other techniques used by the colleges to find funds. Colleges that experienced revival in the 1990s found a friend in the booming stock market. Other colleges sold assets or found ways to use assets and buildings as revenue generators. Still others outsourced auxiliary functions or renegotiated contracts to free up funds.

MacTaggart (2007) identified restoring financial stability as the necessary first step in revitalization. When a college is just a few students away from financial crisis or on the brink of closure, the financial situation must be stabilized. The primary way to do so for colleges in this study was through fund raising.

Fiscal Responsibility

In addition to bringing in more resources, forty one colleges also worked to use their resources more prudently. Fiscal Responsibility took the form of three major sub-variables: spending cuts, budgetary processes, and eliminating or restructuring debt.

No single one of these three techniques was dominate. Spending cuts were implemented at 25 of the colleges. The spending cuts most often affected personnel and staffing, taking the form of layoffs, salary freezes, or benefit cuts. No other single source of spending cuts was mentioned more than once.

The budgetary process received attention at 23 of the colleges. Again, no particular procedure or specific change emerged from the discussion. The primary authors simply reported that the budgetary process was improved or received attention. In a few cases the changes involved becoming more conservative or more organized.

Finally, seventeen colleges either eliminated their debt or restructured it to ease some of the financial pressure on the college.

Mission/Vision

Adding career programs, adult programs, on-line courses and other non-traditional forms of education was a common strategy for these colleges. In some cases this strategy was controversial because some members of the college community believed these types of programs were not consistent with the college's traditional mission. Forty colleges in the study found it necessary to give some attention to the college mission or vision in their revitalization process. Twenty three colleges gave their mission statement primary credit for the turnaround in their summary statements.

Although some colleges sought to establish a new or completely different mission statement, many others preferred to reexamine and update an existing mission or vision. Drexel University found itself "caught between the original mission and the immutable realities of the marketplace, [so] the mission was forced to evolve" (Paul, 2004, p. 328-329). Still other colleges reaffirmed their existing mission and used it a guide for moving forward. "Despite the appearance that the college might have to close, Ryke reaffirmed its liberal arts focus" (Chaffee, 1983, p. 183).

Whether the mission was new, an update, or the reaffirmation of an historical mission, the importance of the mission seemed to be in the unity that a mission or vision created. Nineteen colleges reported the value of a "shared direction" in the revitalization process. In some cases the importance of this unity was stated strongly. "The 'shared vision' philosophy and practice of the new administration had a profound impact in the transformation and turnaround of Cornerstone College" (Hauck, 1998, p. 322). The president was the individual most often given credit for promoting and articulating the college vision although 13 colleges mentioned using some type of retreat, committee or other community process to shape the vision. Two colleges supported the mission by creating administrative structures to implement the mission. In one case it was the hiring of a Vice-President for Mission and another created an Office of Mission Integration.

Change models often indicate that a review of the mission/vision should be done early in a change process that the mission can guide the revitalization. However MacTaggert (2007) found this process was more likely to be part of the third stage – something to be done after financial and marketing issues were taken care of. This study found both scenarios to be possible. Many of the cases in this study did not review the revitalization process chronologically; therefore, there were not a lot of cases that could be used for this analysis. However, for those colleges that provided a clear timeline of events relating to mission and vision examination, the outcome was split. Eight colleges addressed the survival issues (finances and enrollment) first and then proceeded to think about their mission and vision for the future. Five colleges made a point to examine their vision and mission first, before taking other steps toward revitalization.

Enrollment

Since enrollment and financial issues were both closely identified with the state of decline, it is reasonable that enrollment would show up in the revitalization variables. Thirty nine colleges discussed specific measures taken to address enrollment. These measures could fall within the purview of traditional admissions office or they could be external to the admissions office. In order to dig deeper into how the revitalized colleges addressed enrollment, two related sub-variables were created: "Enrollment Activities

Internal to the Admissions Office" and "Enrollment Activities External to the Admissions Office". The "Internal" activities were defined as the traditional recruitment and marketing tasks undertaken by the admissions staff. Activities like increasing high school visits, developing new brochures, or implementing a new marketing plan would be examples of traditional or internal activities. Marketing became "more aggressive" at some colleges. Several cited a move toward an "enrollment management" approach to admissions. Twenty three colleges made changes in admissions office staffing; usually this was in the form of more staff, new leadership, assistance from consultants, or simply enhanced "professionalization" and training of the staff. Finally, there was some mention of enrollment selectivity in the primary studies. In a few cases, colleges lowered admissions standards to increase numbers. In at least one case, the opposite strategy was used. Standards were raised to send a message to the market that things were changing. In most cases, as enrollment went up the colleges could become more selective, but the studies were not clear if this was the cause of or result of the revitalization process.

However, marketing goes beyond the admissions office. MacTaggert (2007) defines it as "all the activities a school engages in to persuade potential students to enroll . . . under the rubric of marketing we include market research, message development, advertising, view books, admissions processes, student preference and satisfaction surveys, services audits, branding strategies, curriculum creation and redesign, resident hall and recreation center renovations, and retention strategies" (p. 32). This list includes factors that are clearly under the purview of academics and student life. When one of these factors was given credit for increased enrollment it was coded as "External to the

Admissions Office". "External" activities were slightly more frequent than the traditional or "Internal" admissions functions.

The most common external activity was the addition of career oriented majors and adult education programs. As already noted, these programs were often added specifically with the goal of increasing enrollment and many were very successful at bringing in new students. Adding new athletic programs was a similar technique. Making the campus more appealing to prospective students through renovation, new building and upgraded technology are other examples of external efforts.

> A college campus and a resort are very similar, and we should use the same principles of making the place beautiful and impressive. Both a resort and a college campus need to be lovely places where you want to visit often and stay. Most parents want to feel that a college is safe, clean, and beautiful, with creature comforts in addition to quality teaching. . . So, I decided to design a storybook southern college that was as beautiful as you could make it and very inviting. I wanted the average mom and dad who were bringing their son or daughter to campus for a visit, to walk on campus and say, "oh my, this is everything I've dreamed a small, southern university could be." (Franks, 2003, p. 69)

Several campuses changed their name in an attempt to enhance their image with prospective students. Changing from a "college" to a "university" was a natural progression for colleges that added graduate and professional programs, and this change had the added benefit of promoting a more prestigious image to prospective students. One interviewee at Grand Rapids Baptist College believed the name change to Cornerstone College opened up the applicant pool to non-Baptist students who previously might not have applied.

Interestingly, retention was not given much attention by any of the colleges in this meta-study. Only 10 of the colleges specifically mentioned retention as part of the enrollment effort. It is likely the steps taken to attract new students enhanced retention by default, so perhaps the colleges did not feel the need to address it as a separate issue. Still, the omission is noteworthy.

Planning

Planning was a factor in many of the turnarounds. Thirty six colleges engaged in some type of planning. Twenty six of them specifically mentioned the term "strategic" planning; some of them engaging in it for the first time. Twenty five colleges engaged in other types of planning processes which they discussed under terms such as budget planning, long range planning, curriculum planning, enrollment planning, master planning and other departmental planning. In a few cases, "recovery" planning groups were put together specifically to address the crisis of decline. Strategic planning and other planning both ended up in the top 10 most frequent sub-variables, even ahead of mission and vision sub-variables.

While the planning process was different at each institution, one common thread in most of the colleges was the variety of people involved in planning. Unlike many other aspects of this study, the president was rarely uniquely associated with planning. Planning became a "mechanism for involvement" (Hartley, 2003, p. 91). "Shared governance became the basis for strategic planning, giving everybody a say, a voice, an opportunity to participate in the whole vision, goals and needs of the institution. Strategic planning here became exciting! For the first time there was open strategic planning taking place" (Hayes III, 2003, p. 91).

The Role of the Board of Trustees

This broad involvement in planning often also involved the Board of Trustees, a group that received a fair amount of attention in the revitalization process. Thirty six colleges reported some aspect of the board as a factor in revitalization. Sixteen colleges saw a change in the involvement level of the board. In almost all cases the board became more involved in the oversight of the college, particularly in the areas of finances and planning. Sixteen colleges experienced a reconfiguration or change in the membership of the board. The new board was typically described as more professional, broader, or strengthened. Boards looked to add expertise to their ranks or to find high profile community and business leaders. In particular, the colleges began examining potential board members based on their ability to assist financially. Fifteen of the schools specifically mentioned board members as sources of funds, either by giving themselves or by bringing in a network of potential donors.

Niche College reflects the changing role of the board.

> The crisis of 1973 seems to have galvanized the trustees into involvement with the college. They pledged overt $100,000 themselves to help see the college through the crisis, and they have helped in various ways ever since. Their quality and commitment were instrumental in keeping creditors patient, and they have assisted the college in contacting area businesses and foundations for support. They are kept informed by the president's thorough briefing reports before every board meeting. (Chaffee, 1983, p. 198)

External

The "External" variable reflects activities and initiatives undertaken outside of the campus community itself. Thirty five primary authors referenced something external as an element in revitalization. The most important external was the relationship of the college with the community. These small colleges made deliberate attempts to improve their relationship with the surrounding community. Often this came in the form of a president or faculty members who developed relationships with community leaders. Sometimes it came in the form of allowing the community to share the facilities and resources of the college. In other cases it involved strategic partnerships with local businesses or other educational institutions. Internships also provided a link to local business and strengthened the tie between the college and local industry.

Partnerships and collaborations were an element for fourteen colleges. These partnerships offered some of the most creative aspects of the revitalization process. The president of Georgetown University asked the faculty which institution in the world they most wanted to create a partnership with. The seemly unrealistic answer came back: Oxford University. After two years of intense negotiation, the president pulled it off and this small Baptist college in Kentucky initiated an ongoing exchange with Oxford University!

"Collaboration College" earned its pseudonym because it joined resources with seven other struggling small colleges in the same community. Although the colleges retain their unique identities, they have increasingly worked to find ways to collaborate and consolidate: a significant money saving effort. Because of a unique relationship with the Roosevelt Family, Chapman University forged a relationship with Nixon Library and is becoming known for its scholarship relating to the Nixon years.

Other activities that fell under the "External" variable were efforts to enhance the image and reputation of the college and efforts to strengthen college ties with their sponsoring denomination.

Student Issues

External relationships are important, but the key constituent for any college is its students. Improving student life, focusing on student needs and retention efforts fell under the "Student Issues" variable which showed up in 35 of the case studies. Techniques for improving student life included adding athletic programs, building new or improved entertainment facilities, adding clubs or activities, giving students more input into campus life, and making campus resources more user friendly. Career services, residential life and counseling services received some attention. "Many people referred to FPC's growth and focus as student-centered, and felt that this focus had been a driving force in change and creating a culture of change" (Perkins, 2007, p. 130).

Culture Change

Many of the colleges recognized culture change needed to be part of the revitalization process and 34 of the cases discussed some aspect of the culture. The primary authors of 24 of the studies described the process of culture change. Many times it was instigated by the president. "Dr. Young's 'passion' for quality, his belief that the institution could be better and his conviction that indeed it was better than people perceived led him to push for institutional change" (Franks, 2003, p. 65).

In other cases it was the crisis itself that created the understanding of the need for change as the aptly named "Rally College" found out.

> The public crisis had a number of beneficial effects. It seems to have created a climate in which rapid major institutional changes were not only accepted, they were demanded—by supporters and college members alike. The future of the college depended upon such rapid, major change. Further, the crisis engendered a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the college, especially within the college. It forced everyone involved to face squarely the question, "Do you want this college or don't you?" In doing so, people rededicated themselves to the college and shared strong hardship-induced bonds among themselves. (Chaffee, 1983, p. 29)

A crisis that demands change is reminiscent of Kotter's (1996) advice regarding the need for a sense of urgency prior to change. Sixteen colleges specifically discussed the importance of recognizing the need to change.

The value of symbolic measures surfaced in 14 cases. A faculty member at Grand Rapids Baptist described the impact of the president's decision to provide free coffee to faculty. “A cup of coffee isn't a big deal, except it's everything” (Hauch, 1998, p. 103). Symbolic efforts are not without peril, however. In the case study of Georgetown University several negative references are made to the “flower episode” when the president borrowed $5 million to beautify the campus. The goal was to create a symbol of change and pride in the campus, but many saw it as colossal waste of money (Rooney, 2005, p. 64).

Faculty/Staff Morale and Development

Campus morale and the development of human resources were discussed by 34 of the colleges. The morale changes on campus were not always positive however. In nineteen cases the campus atmosphere was judged either positive or at least increasing in a positive direction. However, in seven cases the opposite situation existed with either negative morale or morale that was getting worse. Negative morale was sometimes the result of disagreements over the changes that resulted from the revitalization process. In a couple of cases fatigue and overwork generated by the change process amplified morale problems. Sometimes faculty and staff who were not on board with the changes simply left, eliminating some of the negative influences on the morale of the remaining personnel.

Twelve of the colleges made an effort to improve morale and pride on campus through the use of increasing development opportunities or by recruiting highly qualified personnel to enhance the professionalism and prestige of the campus.

Spending/Building/Financial Risks

Spending money on highly qualified personnel and providing faculty development are financial risks. Balancing the budget and cutting spending were part of revitalization, but the opposite approach was also encountered. Spending and taking financial risks occurred at 33 colleges. The most frequently mentioned area of spending was on the physical plant. Twenty five colleges reported building new buildings, renovating or spending money on upgrading the general appearance of the college. Providing raises for existing faculty and hiring new faculty was a spending priority at fourteen colleges.

Operational Efficiency

Twenty four colleges mentioned working on improving some aspect of operational efficiency. The activities that fell under this variable included the implementation of more efficient policies and procedures, new management systems, reorganization, or the adoption of a new business model. Although operational inefficiency did not show up much in the "summary coding" as a key component of turnaround, that could be because it is simply not a glamorous activity. An interviewee at Drexel University observed "the most important thing that Taki [the new president] did is he stopped making these stupid mistakes that were being made. We stopped losing applications. We stopped sending out bad information. Everything that was wrong, we just stopped doing the bad stuff" (Paul, 2004, p. 298).

Cowen (1993) listed operational effectiveness as one of her five "prescriptions" for turnaround. Her definition of operational effectiveness seems to include better budgetary oversight. In this study, budget processes were coded under a separate sub-variable. If the "Operational Effectiveness" variable and the "Improved Budget Process" sub-variable are combined the frequency of this activity jumps to 32, making it tied for the second most frequent revitalization factor. This confirms Cowen's conclusion that effective management and budget processes must not be overlooked.

Alumni

The contribution of the alumni to the revitalization process was acknowledged in 19 of the colleges. Most of the time the alumni's role was primarily financial. The colleges endeavored to engage and involve the alumni with the hope they would be more likely to contribute.

In one case the alumni were directly responsible for preventing the death of the college. The trustees of Wilson College had already announced its closure and begun the process of shuttering the campus when a group of alumni filed a lawsuit to prevent the closure. The legal system sided with the alumni and ordered the reopening of the college. The alumni group did not stop there but became active and loyal supporters of the revitalization process.

Financial Aid

For many prospective students, the cost of a private college is a major barrier to attending. It is interesting that of the major revitalization variables, financial aid ended up so close to the bottom, cited by only 18 colleges. The two major components of this variable were the use of strategic tuition discounting and scholarships to attract students. Very few studies made any mention at all about the cost of their education, but those that did mention it were equally split between raising the price to appear more prestigious versus holding the cost stable to remain affordable.

Themes and Patterns

In addition to examining the variables and sub-variables, the second research question sought to explore themes and patterns that may emerge from the analysis of the 45 revitalization case studies. The literature review provided a starting point for a discussion of some of the themes relevant to declining colleges. Figure 5 outlined a series of continuums identified in the literature. These continuums represent areas in which the literature offers conflicting messages. One of the hopes for this meta-study was that it would provide further insight on some of these issues. In some cases it did shed some light on these issues. In other cases the colleges landed all across the continuums indicating that there is not necessarily just one singular approach that can be successful.

Mission

The first continuum describes the dilemma of mission. Should a mission be focused on a narrow niche or should it be broad to encompass a wide diversity of students? In general, the colleges in this study broadened their focus in the course of revitalization. Many of the liberal arts colleges added career programs. Some of the women's colleges went co-ed. Colleges that catered to the traditional, residential student added adult and distance programs. Primarily undergraduate colleges added graduate programs and became universities. At least two of the denominational colleges made efforts to extend their student body beyond their traditional denominations. Although a few colleges reaffirmed their historical mission to serve a particular niche, there were no cases of colleges scaling back their mission to a smaller niche. The need to broaden the mission may be indicative of the fact that these colleges were so small to begin with. They were desperate for students and had to seek out new markets for survival.

Programs

The second continuum considered the issue of academic programs. Once again, the question was whether a college should seek out a narrow niche of a few unique and distinctive programs or if the college should have a broad diversity of academic programs to appeal to more people. On this issue, the colleges in this meta-study again provided a very clear response. The addition of academic programs at so many of the colleges would indicate these colleges needed to broaden their curriculum so they could respond to market needs. That is not to say that some of the colleges did not seek to find something unique to market. Sometimes they found a "niche" in the sense that they looked for programs that none of their competitors offered. But the niche rarely reflected a narrowed focus. And they did not necessarily add academic programs haphazardly without thought and planning. Often the process of refining the curriculum included a review and consolidation of existing programs before adding new ones. However, the vast majority of the colleges in this study added academic programs and often they added quite a few of them.

One possible reason for the almost universal need for new programs among this group could be that they had been experiencing cutbacks for so long there was nothing left to cut. In this author's personal experience with a declining college, the academic program cuts had been so deep that there was virtually nothing left. Adding programs becomes the only option for continued existence.

The literature advice that colleges cannot "be all things to all people" undoubtedly still holds true, but these colleges clearly needed to be "more things to more people" to survive.

Leadership Style

There is much in the literature about leadership style. On the one hand, a college in distress is told that it needs a strong autocratic leader who will make the tough decisions needed to bring the organization back to health. On the other hand, colleges are often described as places that embrace participatory leadership and nothing gets accomplished without this participation.

On this topic, the experiences of the colleges in this study were mixed. Twelve of the colleges specifically described the turnaround president or administration as "top down" or autocratic. Several of the studies staunchly defended the necessity of this type of leadership in a turnaround situation. But in at least half of these colleges, the existence of a top down management style was not without controversy. "The shift in the culture of the institution's management style, to what is characterized by most respondents as very "top-down," has been a difficult process for some . . ." (Cramer, 2002, p.100). Concerns were expressed about this leadership style, even when giving it credit for the turnaround. At "Enterprise College" "decision making became relatively centralized during the mid-1970s. The faculty have been rankled by this and other moves, but above all they are grateful that the college has been rescued. Faculty now express a desire for more participative decision making, and they are enthusiastic about the prospects for that under the new academic dean who was brought in during 1982" (Chaffee, 1983, p. 42).

Although the top-down leadership style is defended by some, an almost equal number of colleges expressed the importance of participative leadership. Mount Saint Mary's gives the environment of open decision making significant credit for their turnaround. "There was a change in decision making structure. It went from a very authoritative and unilateral style to one that could be characterized as multilateral and shared....It's been a key factor in our transformation" (Hayes III, 2003,p. 94). Tusculum took the concept to the extreme seeking not only participation, but also unanimity.

> In the spring of 1990. less than a year into his presidency. President Knott loaded up all the faculty and senior administration and headed to the mountains of Banner Elk, North Carolina. It was here that a new path for Tusculum College was charted. As one associate explained:
>
> We stayed there for a weekend and we started planning. President Knott started weaving plans together based on our ideas and conversations. President Knott brought in a colleague whom he regarded highly to help facilitate substantive brainstorming about the academic program. The facilitator helped us raise our sights about the academic program. He got us thinking, reading, and determined. President Knott made it clear that we were not leaving the mountain until we had a unanimous vote that this is the direction we're going. And you know that faculty aren't unanimous about anything. We stayed there until it was hammered out and every person in the room said. "We're gonna do it." Once it was unanimous, we were not going to leave without a plan, and that's what we did. (Franks, 2003, p. 136-137)

Other colleges found a balance between authoritative leadership and participation. They had leaders that sought input and participation but ultimately took charge of the final decisions. As the president of Keuka College, Kirk had final authority for all decisions. He acted very quickly and decisively and sought high levels of participation but did not seek consensus and had final decision making authority.

Apparently a successful turnaround can be accomplished by a variety of leadership styles. However, the analysis of the decline variables tells us that wrong leadership style can be disastrous. Perhaps the culture of the particular college and the personality of the president are factors that would need to be considered in selecting the correct leadership style for any particular college. This is clearly an unanswered question that has important implications for a college that is struggling.

Decision Making

There was not enough discussion about the fourth continuum, centralized versus decentralized decision making processes, to provide a definitive statement. There seemed to be a feeling of decentralized decision making in many of the colleges, although this issue was impacted by the leadership style of the president. The word empowerment was not used a lot in the cases, but there was significant discussion about the importance of hiring and developing the right people. The assumption might be that a leader who assembles a strong team would let them function with a certain amount of independence. On the flip side, the turnaround process sometimes requires quick decisions and quick action and some colleges praised their leaders for taking control and getting things done. This is another issue that may be impacted by the culture and leadership style of the president.

Enrollment and Fund Raising

Stated simply, a shortage of money and students are the primary indicators that a college is in decline. Are these shortages the primary *causes* of decline? If treated, can a college in distress recover? Or are they only the outward *symptoms* of deeper problems? These are important questions. If they are the causes of decline, then revitalizing the college should focus on the traditional activities of the admissions office or the development office. However, if they are symptoms of something else, the college needs to dig deeper to diagnose the true cause of its decline. Cowan (1993) classifies enrollment and fund raising efforts as incorrect solutions for troubled colleges. Although money and students are necessary for survival she sees the lack of money or students as "specious problems, which lead to specious solutions and specious solutions do not work" (p. 32). Cowan states "The pre-turnaround presidents at each of the colleges I studied succeeded in raising money, cutting costs and recruiting additional students. But, despite these successes, the colleges continued to decline and the need for money and students increased" (p. 32).

In this meta-study, three of the top five most frequent revitalization activities were directly related to raising money or increasing enrollment. Hamlin and Hungerford's (1989) list of tools used by presidents leading their college out of crisis has a similar pattern. MacTaggert (2007) indicated that stage 1 of the turnaround process is getting the financial house in order. Stage 2 is marketing and branding. Both of these stages encompass fund raising and recruitment.

Do these studies contradict Cowan's statement that enrollment and fund raising activities are "specious solutions"? Perhaps not. All too often the solutions to these problems are overly simplified. If there are not enough students, the college implements a new marketing tactic. But a new marketing tactic is only effective when there is something of value to market. Adding new academic programs is not a "recruiting" technique directly, but for the colleges in this study the new programs provided the admissions office something new and desirable to market and ultimately increased enrollment. These colleges understood that for enrollment solutions to be useful, they needed to look at the entire college system and not limit themselves to the purview of the admissions office.

This approach is consistent with the decline model presented in Figure 6. The model presented a series of cyclical relationships throughout the college that all interact with the central problems of enrollment and money. It illustrates that enrollment and finances are influenced by an entire system of events and influences. Addressing enrollment and financial issues alone does not interrupt the surrounding cycles and so any improvements made in these areas are likely to be drained away by the continuing cycle. Cowan's concern is that colleges will look for one shot solutions within the admissions or fund raising offices and then assume revitalization is complete without looking at any of the other parts of the system.

The fact there were so many other variables in this meta-study indicates these revitalized colleges paid attention to things outside of admissions and fund raising. The enrollment sub-variable "Activities External to the Admissions Office" was larger than the sub-variable "Activities Internal to the Admissions Office" indicating that these colleges looked beyond the admissions office to affect enrollment. Further evidence these colleges did not rely primarily on admissions and fund raising for their revitalization can be found in the analysis of the primary authors' recommendations to other colleges. Recommendations relating to the admissions function were almost non-existent and recommendations relating to fund raising were not particularly common either. Instead the recommendations focused on fixing the leadership, governance, planning and mission of the colleges.

Although this meta-study may not conclusively answer the question of causality, it is clear that fixing the admissions and development offices is not a complete response to enrollment and monetary problems and that these colleges approached revitalization by looking deeper within the organization for revitalization.

Fiscal Responsibility

The final continuum from the literature review is related to fiscal responsibility. Does a college in distress need to cut budgets and balance its budget first or does it need to spend money to make money? "Spending Cuts" was seventh in frequency on the sub-variable list. However, many of the other items on the sub-variable list could not be done without spending money. Adding academic programs and enrollment activities, both within and outside of the admission office, require money, often more money than can be freed up through spending cuts in other areas.

In this case, it appears both sides of the continuum must be pursued with equal fervor. Budget cuts alone were not found at many of the 45 colleges. The colleges had to spend money in order to do the things they need to do to recover. To find the money they needed, the colleges used a combination of techniques. These included cost cutting, but also included fund raising, finding grants, using assets, renegotiating debt, and finding other revenue sources. Although cost cutting was often mentioned as the first step to balancing the budget and implementing a financial turnaround, it was not typically the largest or most important financial action taken. Finding new resources to fund the initiatives needed for recovery was ultimately more significant to the turnaround.

In addition to cutting costs, fiscal responsibility often also included a review of budgetary processes. Many colleges had been in financial trouble long before they knew it. The lack of proper budgeting processes played a role in allowing that to happen. A balanced budget, spending cuts, and budgetary procedures were often tied closely together in these studies.

Governance

The revitalization literature did not give a great deal of attention to governance issues. Leadership discussions seemed to be defined primarily as relating to the president and occasionally to the board. However, the leadership roles of other constituencies and their relationships to each other surfaced in this study as a theme worth exploring. In the discussion of the "Leadership" decline variable, it was noted that much of the dysfunction experienced at these colleges was related to a breakdown in the process of shared governance. The *Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities* outlines an orderly distribution of decision making and leadership responsibility, but these colleges had breakdowns at one or more levels of authority. The sub-variable, "Redefinition of Shared Governance" appeared at 18 colleges and it appeared in the "Summary Coding" four times. However, as a theme, the issue is more important than the numbers would indicate. Attempts to create or restore a balance of power, communication, and decision making processes also appeared as themes in categories relating to leadership, the role of the board, planning, mission and vision, operational efficiency and decision making. Several primary authors made governance issues of the overriding theme of their case study. All told, governance issues were discussed in 30 of the cases.

The nature of the governance process varied by institution. In many cases, governance responsibilities moved downward in the organization, often returning responsibilities to the faculty. In other cases, the governance model moved away from the traditional academic model and became more like a business model. Like leadership style, there does not seem to be the need to embrace any particular governance model; the key appears to be the ability of the college to find something that works for their particular situation and then to implement the model effectively.

> My first job here [Point Park College] was to develop a working faculty handbook that represented the consensus among the board, the faculty, and the administration and that was hard to do. That took two years. So what you first of all have to do is have a governance document that defines the rules.... So it was the first time in the history of the institution that there was a policies and procedures manual that had the approval of the trustees and the faculty. What's happening here in this turnaround is it's being turned into an institution with rules and procedures and policies and standards and it's a slow process. It's taking a long time. (Hayes III, 2003, p. 66)

As Point Park College found out, the process of defining governance structures can take a long time and is not always easy. It is often a work in progress. Twenty four cases discussed on-going problems faced by the revitalized colleges. Fifteen of these on-going problems related to continued struggles in the areas of governance and related issues of communication, role clarity and decision making.

> The on-going problem facing Recovery College has less to do with the bottom line and more to do with the atmosphere on campus. The college is divided into camps, with the top administrators and the trustees in one sector, and the faculty who are spread along spectrum. At one end some faculty are still completely shell-shocked from retrenchment and resistant to all administrative initiatives, believing that the leadership cannot be trusted. At the other extreme, some faculty members are actively involved in the new shared governance structure. In the middle the faculty are working within the new governance structure with varying degrees of commitment to the system. (Allen, 1999, p. 123)

The importance of governance as a recovery issue may be partially related to the nature of the colleges included in this study. This study focused on the very smallest colleges in this country. Trustees, faculty, staff, and students are often attracted to this type of college because of the intimate, familial atmosphere. People feel like they can make a difference and have a real impact on their environment. They can be a "big fish in a small pond". Therefore, people involved with these colleges expect to have an opportunity for input and involvement in decision making. When things do not go their way, there is increased potential for hurt feelings and anger.

These colleges also have a strong sense of mission. They may have a religious mission or a commitment specifically to women or Black students. Faculty, administrators and staff are not paid well, but they will make the financial sacrifice because they feel called to the work of the college. A "missionary zeal" for the college can emerge. This zeal and self sacrifice will be seen as worthwhile if they are feeling valued and personally rewarded. But when they feel like they no longer have the role they believe they should have or if the college changes in uncomfortable ways, anger and resentment can emerge.

Arthur Kirk was the president charged with revitalizing Misericordia University, an historically women's college run by Catholic sisters. He used an authoritative leadership style, acting quickly and decisively, and making unpopular decisions unilaterally. He expresses surprise at the resistance he encountered from the sisters at their loss of power. In retrospect, it should not have been a surprise. The nuns had forsaken marriage, family, and money to commit themselves to a women's college, one of the few places historically where women have power. For an outsider, a man, to usurp that power had to be a huge blow to them, not just professionally, but personally as well.

It could be that the small size and strong sense of mission at many of the colleges in this study contributed to the importance of governance issues. In such an environment, care must be taken to have responsibilities, communication structures and decision making processes that can be agreed upon by the campus community and that fit into the campus culture.

Other Patterns

One of the initial hopes for analysis for this study was to seek out patterns for sub-groups within the study. For instance, did the denominational colleges respond to decline differently than the secular colleges or did the very smallest schools encounter issues that the slightly larger schools did not. This analysis revealed very little of interest. The large number of colleges reviewed under a pseudonym meant the attributes such as size, residential status, and location were unknown for many of the colleges. The choice was to try to "guess" some of the attributes based on information given in the primary study, or to limit this type of analysis to the 31 known colleges. Guessing seemed like a dangerous option so the alternative was to try an analysis using 31 colleges.

There were a few scattered variables that seemed to be different for different sub-groups, but the comparison groups were so small it was unclear if the differences were meaningful. Furthermore, the differences were random and inconsistent so there was little supporting evidence that they were not just coincidence. The conclusion could be that the colleges were homogeneous enough that there were no significant differences between sub-groups. Or the conclusion could simply be that there is not enough data in this study to make any conclusion at all.

Research Question 3

The final research question seeks to develop a revitalization model or strategic change process from the analysis. Change models for business and for education already exist. Most of them are linear or chronological in nature. They suggest certain things must happen first, followed by other elements of change, and concluded by some final events. Although the authors of these models usually acknowledge the steps can be rearranged as needed, there is still a linear thought progression.

This research did not find a compelling linear process. In part, this was due to the nature of the meta-study. Some of the primary authors presented the change process chronologically, giving order and timelines to the events undertaken by the colleges during the turnaround. Other authors did not. They presented the turnaround topically or they presented the college's experiences in light of a particular theory or concept. Some studies looked at two or three schools together and commingled the events of the three colleges. This lack of consistency in the presentation of each college made it impossible to determine a particular pattern or timeline of activities.

Even when the events were presented chronologically a linear model was still elusive. Each college's situation was so unique and often so dire that many had no time for a strategically thought out change process. Recall that at least 29 colleges were discussing closure. Wilson College had already announced its closure and was sending away its students, faculty and staff. Their first revitalization activities included reconnecting the phones and unlocking the admissions office door! For colleges in a life or death situation the immediate need was to find a way to survive and each college had to grasp at whatever it could. An interviewee at American International College expresses this lack of planning.

> There was no time to analyze whether this sort of change was best since an emergency situation requires decisive action. Admittedly there is risk to change without careful consideration. Yet no one criticized these decisions as it was universally accepted that the previous year had been a time of "sink or swim," and all were glad AIC was still in operation" (Perkins, 2007, p.97-98).

Change processes that include a series of steps planned out over a specific time frame generally assume the organization has more time and leisure than these colleges had. Instead, these colleges were primarily reactive, taking a shotgun approach to the process.

> Planning at Collaboration is best described as "reactive" for a number of reasons. First, people at this small college have not felt the freedom to think five years down the road; rather, they are focused on the needs of the current students and the current year's budget. Second, a college with limited resources has difficulty doing thoughtful planning when survival remains a concern and funds for new ventures are not available. Strategic planning at Collaboration was about coping with reality (fluctuating enrollments, tuition discounting, deferred maintenance and technology), not creating a long-term vision for the college. (Allen, 1999, p. 67)

So, rather than a step by step linear change process, the image that emerged from this study was more amorphous and built on the cyclical nature of the decline process.

In the discussion of decline variables, Figure 6 was presented as a Cycle of Decline. At the center of decline were the intertwined concepts of finances and enrollment. It was noted that at a small, tuition dependent college, these two could not be completely separated. Feeding into this twin core was a series of cycles that exacerbated the financial and enrollment decline. To achieve turnaround or revitalization the activities undertaken by the college needed to interrupt or reverse these cycles.

Figure 7 illustrates this concept. In the middle of the figure is a simplified representation of the Cycle of Decline. The revitalization variables take the form of activities that “attack” the cycles in various places. The haphazard and random appearance of the activities represents the concept that revitalization activities can happen in any order and without any particular time frame. Furthermore, no two schools will do things the same way.

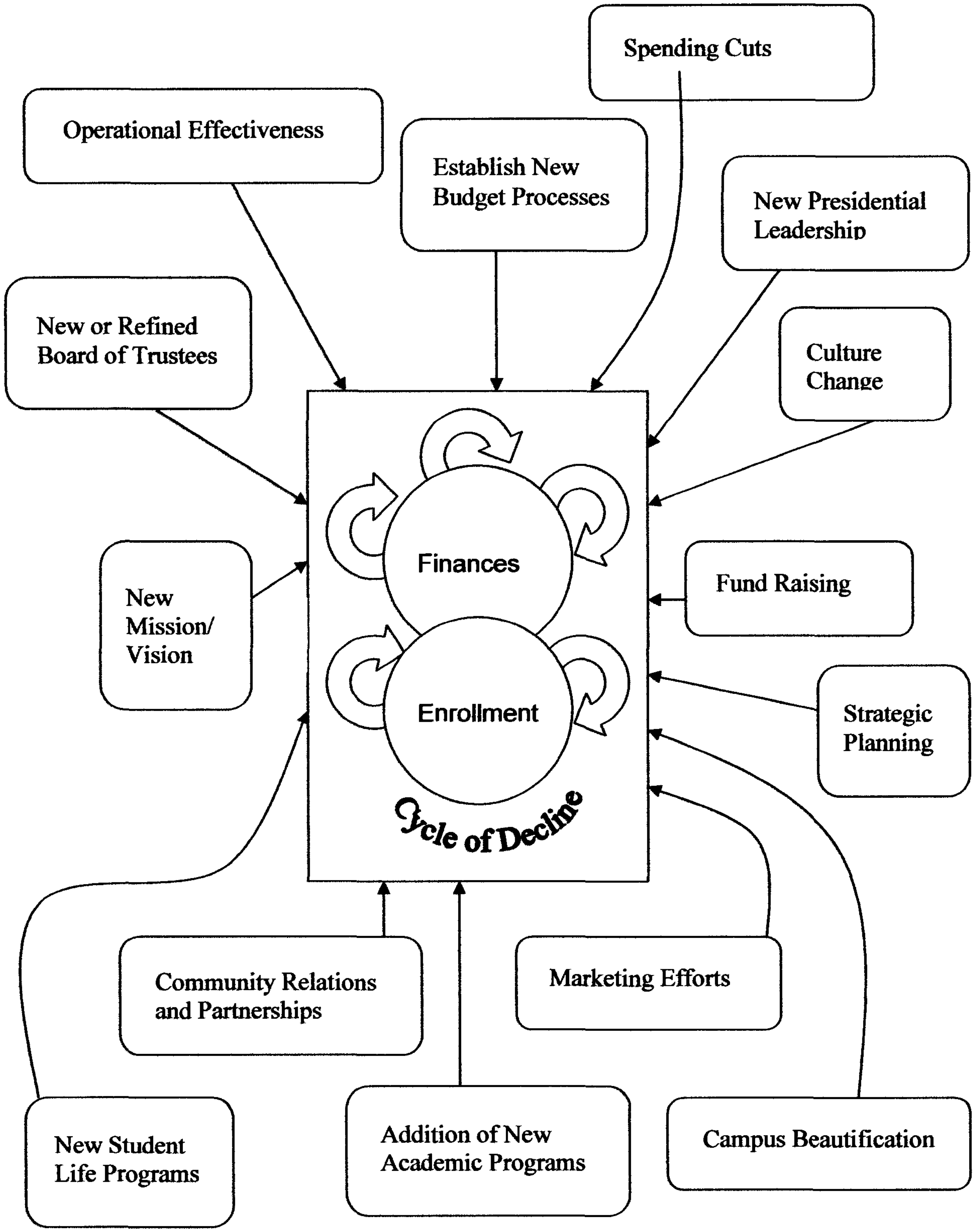

Figure 7. Process of Revitalization

Some of the activities directly influence finances and enrollment, while other activities seek to break into some of the surrounding cycles. A new marketing brochure directly influences enrollment. Other efforts can be indirect and try to reverse one of the cycles that affect enrollment. For example, Elon University developed a $5.5 million dollar campus beautification and improvement plan in an attempt to break the negative image produced by deferred maintenance. "Given the tuition dependency of the institution, the priority needed to be on enrollment. The thinking was that in order to get more and better students. Elon had to have a lovelier campus complete with new residence halls, a richer student life, and improved academic programs" (Franks, 2003, p. 69). Although campus beautification is not a typical marketing activity, the president's philosophy was that the more attractive campus would attract more students and reverse the declining enrollment that resulted from deferred maintenance. He was attempted to reverse the cycle created by deferred maintenance and replace it with a positive growth cycle.

> There are other characteristics of this model that illustrate important features of the revitalization process. A cycle can begin and end at any point and once started, the cycle perpetuates itself. Reversing the cycle can reflect the same pattern. Elon University describes how an influx of money can start a positive growth cycle. Large financial gifts and infusion of new dollars whether through increased revenues at the margin, debt financing, or new gifts galvanized forward movement and institutional planning. Money in the margin was reinvested in the physical plant, personnel and program development that allowed the institution to grow and reposition. Additional resources enabled the institution to improve, thus causing more people *(sic)* students, friends and donors to want to associate with the institution. Furthermore, additional resources created energy and confidence, thus helping the institutions make progress. (Franks, 2003, p. 157)

Dickinson College describes the same effect after they increased admissions standards.

> Everything else follows from attracting abler undergraduates—greater public recognition (and a boost up the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings), more alumni giving, more high-powered faculty. In "re-positioning" the college, all

> decisions, from the design of new student housing to the revision of the curriculum, had to be undertaken with this goal in mind. (Kirp, 2003, p. 37)

Regardless of where or how the cycle begins, the end result is well described as a "rising tide"

> Several administrators and trustees noted that, "a rising tide lifts all boats." The substance of this analogy is evident in that as the institution became stronger and more successful, the faculty also grew in the quality of its credentials, its salary base and resources available for faculty development. (Cramer, 2002, p. 112)

Like decline, revitalization is also a cycle. Once started it can perpetuate itself, this time in a positive direction.

The model also illustrates that the colleges did not just do one project at a time. Typically they tried a number of different approaches all at the same time moving and adjusting their approach as needed based on results. Comments in the cases themselves support the imagery of taking multiple approaches.

> There's been a tremendous amount of new project development in terms of how do we generate student revenue. So there's this program, and this program, and that program, so we're still looking a little bit like "shot-gunnish."... It sounds good, so we'll go over here. (Perkins, 2007, p. 101)

> Some faculty and staff did not see the same deliberateness and likened his approach to that of a shotgun where some of the bullets hit the target however many holes were actually made. Others used the analogy of a pinball machine whereby there is a great deal of sound, light and fury with multiple bouncing balls that sometimes results in a high score. (Rooney, 2005, p.75)

> Midwestern Christian University needed to attack simultaneously on several fronts. These included addressing the financial situation, enhancing denominational support, student enrollment growth, the enhancement of facilities, and increasing the quality in the academic program. (Cramer, 2002, p. 84)

> Everything needed to be done at once and there was understandable pressure to place primary emphasis on favorite areas. The decision was made that it would be necessary to move on all fronts simultaneously, and the process of rebuilding began in that context. (Hayes III, ,2003, p.111)

The disadvantage of a shotgun approach is that when all is said and done, it is impossible to know which bullets hit the target so it is not easy to evaluate the results. "It is difficult to determine the success of the numerous plans in place at Crossroads" (Allen, 1999, p.45). This may account for the large number of variables and sub-variables encountered in this study.

In conclusion, the model created from this research reflects the process of impacting enrollment and finances directly or indirectly using a series of multiple strategies. The strategies do not follow any particular pattern or sequence, but simply reflect attempts to break into one or more areas of decline. As positive results occur, the effect spreads throughout the institution replacing decline with a more positive momentum.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the inspirations for this research was Ruth Cowan's "prescription" for small college turnaround. The hope was that a prescription or model could be developed using the experiences of all 45 colleges. This did not happen quite the way it was visualized. The colleges had such unique experiences and approached the revitalization process so differently that the resulting model was non-linear and haphazard. Furthermore, the recommendations and advice given by the primary authors contradicted each other in dramatic ways. The conclusion is that the idea of a single prescription may be overly simplistic.

The ultimate goal of the study was to create useful information for other colleges facing decline. Despite the lack of a step by step revitalization process, this project does yield some useful conclusions and suggestions that can be used by other colleges. The "executive summary" provided a brief overview of the revitalization process for a reader without the time to explore the topic in depth. Some further conclusions and recommendations provide additional guidance.

Guidance for other Colleges

#1 - Bringing in money and students is top priority

Dealing with the shortage of students and money was of critical importance to these colleges and overwhelmingly dominated the list of revitalization variables. Many of these colleges were on the verge of closure so the need for survival was of utmost concern. They sought opportunities to increase resources quickly.

 # 2 – Do not rely on a single technique for bringing in students or money

These colleges did not rely on a single idea to revitalize. They attacked their problems on several fronts. The large number of variables and large frequency counts indicate the colleges were trying lots of different things in their attempt to revitalize.

 # 3 – In the effort to bring in money and students do not ignore the importance of mission building and planning.

Although mission building and planning did not always get the first attention from a declining college, they were still important parts of the revitalization process. There is no single way to approach mission building, visioning and planning. Some colleges engaged significantly in vision and planning exercises before taking any action. Others combined survival tactics and planning activities all at once. Still others worked hard to revitalize the institution with the expectation that after revitalization they would engage in mission building and planning in order to avoid future crises. In MacTaggart's (2007) study mission building was part of the final revitalization step, but some colleges lost the momentum and this final step was forgotten. Cowen (1993) would probably argue this could be a fatal mistake that could come back and haunt the college in the future.

#4 – Enrollment is not just about the Admissions Office

Although enrollment is often synonymous with the Admissions Office, this was not the case for these colleges. Enrollment growth is about having an institution that attracts students. Creating such an institution involves all segments of the college community. The most common enrollment growth technique for these colleges was the addition of academic programs designed to fill niches or create new markets for the college. In the 1980s and 1990s adult education and distance learning were prime new markets. The addition of career oriented programs and graduate degrees also created new opportunities for new groups of students. Other techniques used to increase enrollment included image building, community partnerships, enhancing the campus appearance, adding facilities or technology, adding sports or other extracurricular activities, and changing the college's name to "university". These types of changes, in combination with a well run enrollment management operation, were the formula for enrollment growth.

#5 – Budget cuts will not save a college in distress

Although controlling spending and keeping a good handle on the budget was important, budget cutting alone did not revitalize the colleges. They needed to enhance what they had to offer to students and this almost always required additional spending. Money saved from budget cuts, as well as new funds, needed to be spent to revive the institution. In addition to the standard fund raising campaigns, the colleges looked for a variety of creative ways to bring in money including refinancing debt, grants, foundations, and developing other revenue sources.

#6 - Leadership is not just about the president

Presidential leadership has received significant attention in the literature and the importance of the right leader cannot be overemphasized. Many of these colleges gave the president extensive credit for the turnaround. However, these cases also emphasized the importance of the president's ability to assemble and develop the rest of the leadership team. This included other administrators, board leadership, and faculty leadership.

A turnaround does not need to be done by a new president. Although most of the colleges in this study associated the turnaround with the coming of specific person as president, not all of them did. An existing president was able to lead a turnaround. In several cases, an intern president or two different presidents were involved in the turnaround. In theses cases each president was able to contribute to the turnaround and build on the work that was already started.

 # 7 – Pay attention to governance issues

Leadership is not just about the people. It is also about the governance systems that guide the people. The colleges needed to have established systems of authority, administrative structure, decision making, and communication. There was variation in the governance structures among the 45 colleges; no particular governance model worked for everyone. The important factor was for the entire campus community to buy into and abide by the system. The small, familial environment of these colleges made this issue more critical than it might be in larger institutions.

#8 – Do not forget about the Board of Trustees

The Boards of these colleges shouldered some of the blame for their college's decline. But, they were also able to step up to the challenge and lead the revitalization. In many cases, the president worked to redefine board membership to involve people with a wider diversity of experience and knowledge. Some boards were expanded. New members were often chosen because of the money they could contribute. Of primary importance was the commitment of the boards to be more involved in the college, stepping up to the responsibilities given to them in the governance process.

#9 – Either top-down leadership or participative leadership styles can be successful

The colleges in this study experienced both leadership styles in roughly equal numbers. However, leaders who used an exclusively top-down leadership style were more likely to encounter lowered morale, complaints, and dissatisfaction. Some leaders were able to create a hybrid style of authoritative leadership that still invited participation and input but allowed the leader to get things done efficiently.

#10 – Creativity and strategic partnerships are imperative

These colleges were creative in finding resources and creating niches for themselves. The creativity encompassed finding funding sources, developing partnerships with other colleges and the community, and creating academic niches that gave them a unique product. They found ways to utilize their unique mission or history to create a new focus. Colleges in trouble truly must be prepared to "think outside the box".

#11 – Revitalization usually involves broadening mission and programs

Some of the literature reviewed for this study warns against a college trying to "be all things to all people" and advises colleges to create a unique focus. However, the colleges in this study were so small to begin with that they generally had to broaden their focus and their constituencies just to survive. A niche that is too narrow or a constituency that is too restricted limits a college's options for enrollment growth. Women's colleges often went co-ed. Denominational colleges had to seek out students from other denominations. Colleges with limited or out of date majors had to consider adding new majors.

This is not an invitation to add programs randomly or haphazardly. Nor is it an invitation to ignore the mission of the institution. The expansion should be done with a plan and purpose. But, for the types of colleges in this study, survival required the college to become "more things to more people".

#12 – Openness is important

Many of these colleges got into a decline situation because of the lack of information. The true financial state of the college was often a surprise to the board, the administration, the faculty, and sometimes even the president. The first step of the revitalization process for many of these colleges was the sharing of the condition of the college. Only then, did the community pull together to create the change process that was needed to survive. Participants also appreciated communication and openness throughout the revitalization process, even when the campus leadership style was autocratic.

#13 – Operational efficiency and effective budget processes are not glamorous, but are necessary.

Even when looked at separately, these two sub-variables are important. But a broader definition of efficiency that combines management and budgetary effectiveness becomes a powerful component of the revitalization process.

#14 – Revitalization does not need to include the use of scholarships or tuition discounting

Some conclusions are reached based on findings. Other conclusions can be reached based on omissions. The use of scholarships and tuition discounting to attract students and increase enrollment was lower than might be anticipated. A few colleges used fairly sophisticated financial models to determine the optimal cost and discount rate needed to attract students. But this was not done by the majority of the colleges. One possible explanation might be that this kind of modeling is a recent trend and since many of these primary studies were done in the 1980s and 1990s this technique may have been unknown to them.

Suggestions for Further Research

As is often the case, this research opened up ideas for further exploration. An interesting complement to this meta-study would be a similarly designed meta-study using cases of closed colleges rather than revitalized colleges. Such case studies exist, although perhaps not as many of them. A meta-study of those cases might uncover more detail about the process of decline. Comparing the closed colleges to the revitalized colleges would provide the opportunity to look for differences between the two groups.

Another area of exploration might involve a more detailed literature search on the topic of governance in small colleges. In the literature search for this paper the issue of governance was not a primary topic and therefore no particular effort was made to research it. Now that the issue emerged it would be worth doing a more comprehensive search for literature relating to the role of governance in the revitalization process. It might also be interesting to consider governance differences between small, private colleges and other types of higher education.

This research did not resolve the issue of leadership style. Some colleges staunchly defended an autocratic, take charge leadership style. Other colleges just as strongly defended a participative and open style. Which style might be better suited for which kinds of colleges? This issue, in conjunction with the governance issue, might be interesting to explore. A survey of small private colleges to determine their leadership and governance styles might provide some interesting insights.

A final area of potential research might focus on the lack of tuition discounting and scholarships. This seemed like a curious omission and it would be interesting to determine if it was a finding unique to this particular study. It was theorized some of the more sophisticated tuition discounting techniques were not in common use at the time many of these studies were done. Research on the currently used tuition and scholarship practices at small, private colleges might provide some insight.

Conclusion

Small, private colleges have been an important part of the diversity of higher education in the United States for 400 years. Nevertheless, there has been significant concern for their survival over the years. The end of the baby boom in the 1970s ushered in a new era of concern for them. Some of the fears now seem unfounded. As a group, small, private colleges continued to grow. But, individual colleges have not all shared in this success and a handful of colleges close each year. Others are on the brink of disaster and may not even know it. This research study was designed for them. It offers them hope for their survival and guidance based on the experiences of a large number of their peers.

In 1982, West concluded that the ingenuity, tenacity, and creativity of small private colleges enabled them to survive and even thrive. In 2008, this research appears to have reached the same conclusion.

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APPENDIX A

Instrument for Collecting Data from Primary Studies

General Information

Article Title:

Type of Document:

Data Collection Methods:

Author:

Author's Institution or Organization:

Date Published:

Date Data Gathered:

Date Reviewed:

Research Question(s):

Institution Information

Name of Institution Studied:

Type of Institution:

Founding data of Institution:

Size of Institution:
Smallest:
Largest:

Endowment:
Smallest:
Largest:

Location of Institution:

Time period of decline:

Time period of revitalization:

Year that study identifies as period of change:

Other information:

Current Information about the school

IPEDS Enrollment:

IPEDS FT Tuition:

IPEDS Retention Rate:

IPEDS Graduation Rate:

NACUBO 2005 Endowment:

Carnegie Basic Classification:

Carnegie Size and Setting Classification:

Carnegie Selectivity:

Decline Variables

Pages

________ Financial Issues D:

________ Endowment D:

________ Enrollment D:

________ Prestige/Selectivity D:

________ Student Satisfaction D:

________ Retention D:

________ Faculty Turnover D:

________ Faculty/Staff Morale D:

________ Faculty/Staff Salaries D:

________ Layoffs D:

________ Planning D:

________ Leadership D:

________ Deferred Maintenance D:

________ Community Relationships D:

________ Negative Publicity D:

________ Alumni D:

Revitalization Variables

_______ Mission/Vision/Goals R:

_______ Leadership R:

_______ Controlling Leadership R:

_______ Participative Leadership R:

_______ Campus Participation R:

_______ Role of Trustees R:

_______ Alumni R:

_______ Community R:

_______ Partnership/Consortia R:

_______ Influx of Financial Resources R:

_______ Financial Risks R:

_______ Fund Raising Efforts R:

_______ Fiscal Responsibility R:

_______ Spending Cuts R:

_______ Spending Increases R:

_______ Financial Aid Initiatives R:

_______ Planning Processes R:

_______ Process of Turnaround R:

_______ Culture Change R:

_______ Symbolic Efforts R:

_______ Cataclysmic Events R:

_______ Faculty/Staff Morale R:

________ Faculty/Staff R:

_______ Campus Relationships R:

________ Extracurricular Programmatic Changes R:

________ Extracurricular Additions R:

________ Extracurricular Cuts R:

________ Student Services R:

________ Athletics R:

________ Academic Programmatic Changes R:

________ Academic Additions R:

________ Academic Cuts R:

________ Academic Standards R:

________ Operational Effectiveness R:

________ Marketing/ Enrollment Efforts R:

________ Admissions Standards R:

________ Student Satisfaction R:

________ Retention R:

________ Summary:

Unique Circumstances and other things not covered

Problems that arose

Recommendations made by study authors

APPENDIX B

American International College
Bethany University
Bradford College
Catawba College
Chapman University
Chatham University
Chestnut Hill College
"Collaboration College"
Misericordia University
Cornerstone University (formerly Grand Rapids Baptist)
"Crossroads College"
"Crossroads College"
Dickenson College
Drexel University
Elon University
"Enterprise College"
Franklin Pierce College
Georgetown College
Hood College
Keuka College
LeMoyne-Owen College
"Lutheran College"
Lyon College (formerly Arkansas College)
"Mennonite College"
"Midwestern Christian University"
"Monument College"
Mount St. Mary's University
New England College
"Niche College"
Olivet College
Point Park College
"Rally College"
"Recovery College"
Regis University
"Ryke College"
Shaw University
Southern Wesleyan University
"St. Edward's College"
"St. Margaret's"
The College of Idaho
Tusculum College
University of Findlay
Washington College
Wesley College
Wilson College

Colleges in quotations marks are pseudonyms