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The Role of the University Partnership Center in Transforming St.
Petersburg College to A Four-Year College: A Case Study

Lars Andrew Hafner

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP CENTER
IN TRANSFORMING ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE
TO A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE: A CASE STUDY

DISSERTATION

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by

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP CENTER
IN TRANSFORMING ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE
TO A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE: A CASE STUDY

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Barry University, 2006

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This study focused on the University Partnership Center (UPC) at St. Petersburg College and how it was the impetus for changing St. Petersburg College (SPC) from a two-year college to a four-year college. The method used to explore this phenomena was qualitative research in the case study tradition. The sample was comprised of five purposively selected leaders who were directly involved in the creation of the UPC at SPC. Data was collected through the use of structured interviews, including the use of open-ended questions as well as a review of other pertinent documentation. Data analysis procedures and methods verification in the case study tradition were followed. The data collected was analyzed through the use of coding, triangulation, and interpretation by the researcher. Findings were presented in response to the research question. Through use of deep, rich descriptions, I sought to produce knowledge while establishing trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability within this qualitative study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since their inception, junior/community colleges have been part of a unique American educational movement. Originally, community colleges emphasized the first two years of higher education. Today these colleges are complex institutions that provide services that include educational, social, and economic functions. Community colleges have changed the paradigm of higher education from students moving away to go to college to students having access to affordable higher learning in their local communities (Boggs, 2004). Community colleges emphasize being responsive to the ever changing needs of their community. Bailey and Averianovea (1999) state that “many community college advocates hail the comprehensiveness of these institutions, arguing that the ever-expanding mission is an expression of a commitment to serve the changing needs of the community” (p. 1). Recently, one of these needs came to the forefront when it became evident that more baccalaureate degrees were needed in Florida. One way to meet this need was for Community colleges to provide the venue for full degree programs through collaboration with university partners. University Partnership Centers on community college campuses were the result of this collaboration.

University Partnership Centers (UPCs) are a new concept that began in the early 1990’s. They were formed as a way to bring higher education opportunities to a geographical area without creating a permanent infrastructure. The focus of UPCs was to offer entire baccalaureate and graduate degrees in one convenient setting, that of a community college campus, offering easy accessibility to students who otherwise could

not move or travel to attend a university or college at a distance. The first partnership center of magnitude was located at Macomb Community College in Macomb, Michigan. This partnership center was the trend-setter for future centers that were developed at North Harris Community College in Houston, Texas, and Lorraine Community College in Cleveland, Ohio. Since the start of these three centers, other partnership centers and partnership models have been created around the United States and Canada.

The first major partnership center in the state of Florida was founded at St. Petersburg College (SPC). In March 1999, St. Petersburg College received both federal and state grants to develop the University Partnership Center (UPC). These dollars enabled greater access to higher education in Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay area. In Fall of 1999, the UPC began with seven highly respected and accredited partners offering 33 courses in 16 bachelor degree programs. Enrollment was 251 at that time, and has since grown to over 3,700 enrolled students in 2006.

The first in Florida, and one of a handful nationwide, the UPC at SPC provides a vehicle for students to obtain degrees in a variety of subjects, including such fields as Business, Computer Science, Pharmacy, Hospitality Management, Elementary Education, and Nursing. A UPC student experiences the same academic standard of learning as they would by attending the home campuses of the partner institutions. The home campus is the location of the actual university site. A variety of methods are used to deliver UPC courses, depending on the program selected.

Some courses are taught in traditional classroom settings where instructors from the “home” campus teach students attending class on a designated campus. Classes are

also taught through the two-way interactive approach where students view instructors who are lecturing at another location. Video cameras allow students and the instructor to see each other, ask questions, and talk with one another. A third way is Web-based classes that allow students to take courses online with mentors. Web-based instruction is enhanced through the UPC at SPC by providing students the opportunity to meet periodically with the mentor from the student's "home" campus. The UPC at SPC also uses a blended method which is a combination of any of the above types of delivery.

The UPC at SPC has been the basis for other partnership centers starting at community colleges throughout Florida, the United States and Canada. The partnership center at SPC has become a national model. It also compelled SPC to reevaluate its mission of only educating two-year students.

Statement of the Problem

Public and private universities within Florida's higher education marketplace in the 1990's faced both spiraling demand for baccalaureate access and spiraling costs at their campuses (Walker, 2000). While private universities were flexible in finding additional sources of revenues and continued to grow, public senior institutions chose restrictive enrollment management on campus (Jones, 2001). In Florida, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) found that Florida ranked 46th among the 50 U.S. states in baccalaureate access, and in Pinellas County, the fourth largest county in Florida, they ranked 67th of 67 in terms of baccalaureate access opportunities (Florida Board of Education, 2002).

The Florida Legislature was confronted with this problem and needed to explore ways in which to create more baccalaureate access for an increasingly diverse population throughout Florida, and in Pinellas County in particular. As a result, the legislature chose to fund the creation of a University Partnership Center to be located at St. Petersburg College which was the first of its kind in Florida and one of only a handful in the nation.

Purpose of the Study

University Partnership Centers (UPC) are a new concept that began in the early to mid 1990's. Review of the higher education literature reveals limited research on the subject of UPC's and whether they could be the foundation for community colleges offering four-year degrees. The purpose of this study is to tell the story of how the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College served as the impetus for St. Petersburg College to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees.

Research Question

As the literature is reviewed, the research question becomes more focused. Even though the question will continue to evolve as more is learned about the subject through further research, the current research questions provides a focus for going forward (Berg, 2004). In case studies, the research generally serves to answer one or more questions (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003), and the questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their inter-relationships (Creswell, 1998).

The overarching research question that will guide this study is:

What was the role of the University Partnership Center in transforming St. Petersburg College to a four-year college?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is the set of terms and relationships within which a problem is formulated and solved. The theoretical framework chosen by the researcher should help contribute to new understandings or solutions to problems. It establishes a viewpoint, a perspective, a set of lenses through which the researcher views the problem. The framework used in this study will be the theoretical construct of two major theories, organizational change and transformational leadership.

Significance of the Study

Partnership centers are a popular trend with 18 of the 28 community colleges in Florida having or starting partnership centers and this trend is spreading nationwide. The standard model for UPCs is set by the one located at St. Petersburg College (D. Armstrong, personal communication, May 6, 2006). Because of the relative newness of the partnership model, however, there have been limited studies completed on UPCs and no studies have been conducted on the effect a UPC has on helping a higher educational institution change status. With the Florida Legislature suggesting the need for more baccalaureate degree opportunities in all areas of the state it is important to explore how SPC transformed itself and what role the UPC played in that transformation.

This case study brings to light how St. Petersburg College was able to leverage the University Partnership Center success into obtaining four-year degree status. This roadmap could help the legislature decide if this is the right process for other community

colleges to take in order to request four-year status. Additionally, other community colleges that are contemplating establishing their own baccalaureate degree programs will find this study useful in establishing a UPC as a first-step in testing the waters.

This study is important because it develops a model for all community colleges who want to use the partnership center model as a basis for gaining four-year status. As the state legislature looks for fiscally conservative ways to deliver higher education throughout Florida, the UPC at SPC model and now the SPC four-year model will be helpful in guiding the legislators in this debate. This study also allows legislators to determine if they prefer using the partnership model to increase higher education opportunities in an area or whether the UPC should be used to demonstrate the need for baccalaureate degrees, allowing community colleges to start four-year programs.

Origins of the Researcher's Interest

St. Petersburg College is one of the largest and successful community colleges in the country (D. Armstrong, personal communication, May 6, 2006). When the college chose to expand its mission and offer access to baccalaureate and graduate degrees through the University Partnership Center, watching the college embrace and implement this new role was fascinating. Once the UPC demonstrated success, the next step was for the college to move forward with offering four-year degrees, which was trend setting. It is the synergies of these two phenomena together that increased my interest in conducting this study.

Research Design

There has been a long debate over the use of quantitative versus qualitative

methods and which method offers the most legitimacy to research. Until recently, quantitative research was used more frequently in studies; however, qualitative methods have become accepted as a legitimate alternative to traditional empirical methods (Slife & Williams, 1995). This pattern shift is related to researchers finding pertinent uses of qualitative research (Shank & Villella, 2004).

Qualitative data is information that is gathered with methods that are personal, direct, and open-ended, and allows responses to be free flowing without restraints (Creswell, 1998). The quantitative researcher views the world and its events as an objective reality apart from the beliefs of individuals; the qualitative researcher believes that one can identify reasons and explanations based on the perceptions of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon (Creswell). Qualitative research has been described as *verstehen* or *understanding* by Patton (2002). The *verstehen* or *understanding* approach to scientific inquiry is based on the application of critical intelligence to social phenomena without relying entirely on the abstraction of numerical representation (Patton).

Qualitative research seeks to describe and explain the particular phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In qualitative research, the questions and problems are usually derived from real-world observations, dilemmas, and questions, and take the form of wide-ranging inquiries (Marshall & Rossman). Qualitative research produces descriptive data-people's own written or spoken words (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). A study that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a social

phenomenon naturally lends itself to qualitative types of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Furthermore, the most effective strategy to ascertain the in-depth perspectives of others is through qualitative interviewing (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research methods acknowledge that the experience of individuals is important and valid, and brings to light data that were previously averaged away or simply never considered by quantitative methods (Creswell, 1998).

In this study, I explored the role of the UPC at SPC in transforming SPC into a four year college. The purpose of this study was to tell the story of how the UPC at SPC served as the impetus for SPC to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees. This type of in-depth study of the perspectives of others naturally lent itself to qualitative research and by integrating the limited amount of information on UPCs already available from various related disciplines, serves to advance the development of a model for other colleges. Such a model also serves as a baseline and a contextual framework for the development of future research hypotheses. In sum, this study attempts to understand the phenomenon of the partnership center transforming a college through case study interviews of individuals who were directly involved in the phenomenon.

Definition of Terms

University Partnership Centers - A center located on a community college campus that partners with different universities and colleges to bring complete baccalaureate and graduate degrees to the center.

Partner University - A university that has made the commitment to teach an entire degree program at the University Partnership Center, by one or more methods of delivery.

Hybrid College – a community college that offers four-year degrees while keeping its community college mission.

Host College – The community college where the partnership center is located.

Home Campus – The college or university from which the student intends to receive their degree.

Limitations

The qualitative researcher seeks to understand and to relate the subjective understandings and the actions of those being studied. Moreover, in some cases, the relationship between the researcher and the researched can be a very close one even to the point of collaboration (Patton, 2001); however, this closeness can in some instances be viewed as a limitation in that the data collected, analyzed, and synthesized will only be done by the researcher. Therefore, some biases or assumptions can be attributed to one person. The fact that there is one researcher can also mean there is a consistent, prevailing point of view applied to all information gathered, increasing the internal validity of the study.

Another limitation to this study is whether the interviewees are willing to speak on the record with the candor that is necessary to get the appropriate information. It is also understood that data collected verbally are more susceptible to human vagaries than

numerical data that is collected. Both these instances could cause inaccurate data to be collected and analyzed.

Credibility refers to truth value (validity) and whether truthful and credible findings and interpretations are produced (Schwandt, 2001). Several measures improve credibility. According to Patton (2002), “rigorous methods for collecting high quality data, the credibility of the researcher and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry are three of the ways to improve credibility” (p. 552). A researcher also needs to provide assurances of the fit between the participants’ experiences and the researchers’ reconstruction and representation of these experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt). As a member of this professional group, I share a common language and an understanding of the phenomenon with the participants. Credibility depends less on sample size than on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher (Patton, 2002). Therefore, credibility is highly dependent on my skills as the researcher during data collection and analysis.

The credibility of this study will be enhanced through the triangulation of data. Triangulation is a means of checking the integrity of the inferences that are drawn by the researcher. The researcher looks for patterns of convergence to develop an overall interpretation which is ultimately presented as findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One method of triangulation is the use of multiple data sources (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schwandt, 2001), and in the case of this study both interviews and documents will be used as sources of data.

Chapter Summary

Community colleges have continued to evolve throughout their history by placing an emphasis on being responsive to the changing needs of their community. Recently, one of those needs came to the forefront as it became evident that greater access to baccalaureate degrees are needed in Florida, and community colleges may provide the venue for such programs through collaboration with university partners at centers on community college campuses to teach full degree programs. St. Petersburg College developed one of the first and largest University Partnership Centers in Florida and the nation. Three years after the UPC demonstrated substantial need for more baccalaureate degree access, and the need to serve an increasingly diverse community, SPC started its own four-year programs. This study explores how the UPC at SPC served as the impetus for SPC to become a four-year college.

The next chapter reviews the literature on organizational change and transformational leadership. Chapter Two also explores the role of the community college system, the innovation of community colleges and what has taken place at the UPC at SPC. Chapter Three explains the method, including a discussion of the research design. Chapter Four presents the research results and Chapter Five discusses the findings, the limitations of the study, and future recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature surrounding the role of the University Partnership Center in transforming St. Petersburg College from a two-year to a four-year institution. The literature review begins with a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that attempt to explain the evolution -- organizational change and transformational leadership, both of which are key components in any institutional transformation. Additionally, a literature review of the role of community colleges in higher education is presented, along with the construct of partnerships in higher education. In any qualitative study, context is also an important consideration, especially in a case study (Yin, 2005). The context for this study is St. Petersburg College, its unique history and evolution, and the subsequent establishment of the University Partnership Center. These components are important and relevant to understanding the organizational model and leadership that was instrumental in creating the UPC which led to SPC becoming a four-year college. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is the set of terms and relationships within which a problem is formulated and solved. The theoretical framework should help contribute to new understandings or solutions to problems. It establishes a viewpoint, a perspective, a set of lenses through which to view the problem. The framework used in this study is the

theoretical constructs of two major theories, organizational change and transformational leadership.

Organizational Change

The literature on organizational theory evolved over time from the broad domain of organizational change to that of transformational change. Analyses of transformation efforts researched and published over the last half century contain treatment of various aspects of organizational change theory, including writings about organizational change related to learning, planning, intervention, visioning, and teamwork. In case studies, the terms organizational development theory and organizational transformation theory have often been used interchangeably and have coexisted uneasily for the past several decades (Weisbord, 1987). Difficulties with distinguishing and, therefore, discussing organizational development theory and organizational transformation theory are due to confusion with organization development being the recognizable name of both a profession and the parent theory of organizational transformation theory (Weisbord). The amount of literature pertaining to organizational change theory is immense. Knowledge about organizational change in higher education emerges in the intersections of sociology, higher education, and organizational theory literature.

The test of time and longevity gives credibility to theories. Lewin's Change Theory, established in 1949, has been studied and refined for the past half century and the basic concepts are the core of organizational change theories (Connors, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Schein, 2004). Lewin (as cited in Schein, 2004) identified three steps in his Change Theory: "Unfreezing, changing, and refreezing" (p. 15). Unfreeze is what Lewin referred

to as “disequilibrium.” Kotter (2002) developed four stages of action within the unfreezing stage. The first of these four is to create a sense of urgency, where the employees start to tell each other that things need to change. Next is to build a guiding team of powerful and influential individuals that will work together to make the necessary change. This is followed by the development of a vision and strategy. Finally, the vision will be communicated for buy-in and accepting of the change.

While the evolution occurs, it is important to look at what Lewin (1951) referred to as “re-equilibrium.” Kotter (2002) explained this change in three phases with the first being empowerment or giving the employees the ability to act on the vision that has been created. Next is to create short term victories to build the necessary momentum to fulfill the vision. This is followed by a “don’t give up attitude” (p. 7).

The final stage of Lewin’s Change Theory is to “refreeze” or return to equilibrium. As Kotter (1996) stated in his eighth stage, “Creating better performance through customer and productivity-oriented behavior, more and better leadership, and more effective management is the way to return to equilibrium” (p. 21). The sequence of the stages or steps is important to the success of change of any magnitude.

Transformational Leadership

The study of leadership is not only considered an exciting topic, but it is also viewed as a complex matter (Northouse, 2004). Sustaining successful change in higher education is no small feat (Curry, 1992; Levine, 1980; Marsick & Watkins, 1990; Rowley & Sherman, 2001). Researchers have found that leadership is critical to the success of an organization and it can exhibit tremendous influence (Northouse). Kouzes and Posner

(2002) found that leadership consists of a set of skills and practices that enable leaders to accomplish extraordinary accomplishments, even in tough times. Leaders should be prepared to take significant risks to achieve their goals and mission. Leaders should have high expectations and high standards of themselves and their followers at all times (Northouse).

One leadership style that has been shown to be effective in more innovative, non-routine change situations is transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eisenbach, Watson & Pillai, 1999). Transformational leaders motivate followers to transcend self-interest for the sake of a higher cause, therefore accomplishing the vision of the future that the leader has articulated as the goal. Since the early 1980s the transformational approach to leadership has been the focus of much research (Northouse, 2004). Research shows that leaders who exhibit strong leadership behaviors - such as intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idea influence - achieve greater successes not only with employees but also with organizational effectiveness and change (Lowe, Kroek, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

Transformational leadership is a combination of behavioral theories and trait theories (Bass, 1985). Burns (1978) expanded upon this theory making transformational leadership one of the most influential leadership paradigms of the past few decades. Burns studied political leaders and found a contrast and fundamental distinction between two types of leadership style - transforming and transactional leadership. Transactional leadership, stated Burns, “occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things” (p.19). The valued things

may be in the nature of economic, political, or psychological. The leader may secure economic benefits for followers who in turn give credibility to the leader.

Hollander (1993) argued that leadership theorists contend that the transactional exchange describes all leadership. Burns (1978), however, made the case that transactional leadership should be distinguished at a very fundamental level from transforming or transformational leadership. Transformational leaders guide followers in the direction of established goals by clarifying role and task requirements. In some cases transformational leaders, who are charismatic and visionary, can inspire followers to transcend their own self-interest for the good of the organization. There are several traits characteristic of a transformational leader. The first is the ability to develop a vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). This vision is a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers. This vision may be developed by the leader, by the senior team or may emerge from a broad series of discussions. The important factor is that the leader has no doubts about the vision. The leader must then sell the vision which is an ongoing process that requires much energy and commitment, as people at first may be hesitant to buy into the vision and some will join much slower than others. Therefore, a transformational leader will use whatever means to convince people to follow along. In order to gain followers, the transformational leader must be careful in creating trust; thus, the leader's personal integrity is critical. The leader is really selling both himself or herself, as well as his/her vision (Bennis & Nanus).

Moving forward is the next important component in transformational leadership. While some transformational leaders can move forward because they know the way,

others do not have a ready strategy, but are willing to blaze new trails. Even in moving forward, the transformational leader recognizes that there may be some failures along the way towards reaching his/her vision, but will remain optimistic as long as he/she believes progress is being made (Northouse, 2004).

Another key to transformational leadership is motivation. Motivation will occur when a leader develops and communicates an appealing vision of the future. Envisioning is both art and skill (Bass & Avolio, 1990), and includes the creative use of acknowledgements to focus the efforts of those involved with the transformation. By involving subordinates in vision development, the leader is able to motivate them to fulfill a jointly embraced vision. Inspirational leaders motivate people to perform beyond expectation (Bass, 1985). Team spirit and optimism are aroused by motivation, and followers gain a sense of meaning and challenge in their work (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

The final stage in transformational leadership is to remain central during the action and show who is leading the charge (Bass, 1985). Transformational leaders will always be in the forefront and are willing to take responsibility. They demonstrate through their actions and attitudes how everyone else should behave (Northouse, 2004). It is important that they continually work at motivating their followers by listening, soothing and enthusing (Bass). The balance of their attention is divided between action that creates progress and the mental state of their followers (Northouse).

Transformational leaders are relevant to today's workplace because they are flexible and innovative. While it is important to have leaders with the appropriate

orientation, defining tasks and managing interrelationships, it is even more important to have leaders who can bring organizations into futures they have not yet imagined (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Transformational leadership is the essence of creating and sustaining competitive advantage.

Good educational leadership, throughout history, has been the focus of intense debate and speculation. Numerous higher education practitioners and organization researchers (Birnbaum, 1988; Clark, 1998; Cohen & March, 1974; Duderstadt, 2000; Eckel, Green, Hill, & Mallon, 1999) have examined connections between leadership in higher education and successful institutional change because leadership attentive to the distinctiveness of higher education systems is crucial to successful change. Moreover, the importance of the president of a college as a key factor in the success of a college has become a major focus of current efforts to improve higher education (Kuss, 2000). The president of today and tomorrow faces a rapidly changing environment. The political, social, economic, and technological forces that are influencing our society have a significant impact on all aspects of higher education (Maccoby, 2004). The leadership to be creative and innovative as well as the risk involved is important in a leader if they are to change their institution to meet the needs of today's society (Moore, 1998). At St. Petersburg College, the president is the visionary who creates the climate and impetus for staff to become involved with innovative ideas such as the University Partnership Center and transitioning St. Petersburg College into a four-year institution.

Community College Role in Higher Education

The junior college system, later called the community college system, was founded in 1901 as an experimental postgraduate high school program (Cohen & Brawer, 2002). The first junior college was Joliet Junior College located in Joliet, Illinois. The founders of this college were J. Stanley Brown, Superintendent of Joliet Township High School, and William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago. Brown and Harper created a junior college that was an academic parallel to the first two years of a four-year college or university. It was designed to accommodate students who desired to remain within the community and still pursue a college education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2006).

Community colleges, over the past 100 years of service to their internal and external communities, have been presented with wide ranging opportunities to serve. According to the U.S. President's Commission on Higher Education (1947), the original mission of the community college was to address transfer, vocational, and adult education as well as accessibility and affordability. Over time this mission has evolved to include other functions, caused by the increased number of community colleges and growth in student environment throughout America (Cohen & Brawer, 2002). Over the decades since community colleges came into existence their mission has included at least a few of the following functions: general education, workforce development, customized training, community education, economic development, and remedial education.

Today, the comprehensive community college mission has changed to keep up with demands and complexities (Harbour, 2003). The new types of missions can be

classified into two areas, those considered to be traditional functions of a community college and those functions dealing with non-traditional roles. The comprehensive mission is defined as “a philosophical principle that justified and required the delivery of a broad range of educational programs (e.g., developmental studies, transfer, career training, and continuing education)” (Harbour, p. 308). Ayers (2002) explained that the non-traditionalists viewed the comprehensive mission as providing a breadth of opportunity to improve the community college’s internal and external environments. With both these ideas moving forward, Bailey and Morest (2004) stated that “current trends clearly suggest that community colleges will continue to take on more activities and missions. We see no indication that colleges will deemphasize any of their core functions” (p. 35).

Throughout the decades, community colleges have built a national network in all 50 states and enrolled half the students who began college in America (American Association of Community Colleges, 2006). Geographically, most community colleges are located within a fifty-mile radius of their students. Therefore, community colleges are more responsive to meeting community needs as compared to universities (Ayers, 2002). This includes allowing the community to play a significant role in defining the focus of the institution as it relates to the institutional culture and success. The community may also define the community college’s services, programs and functions accordingly.

Beginning with the original mission, community colleges have always been innovative and willing to change emphasis throughout the decades of their existence (Cohen & Brawer, 2002). The first notable change was that of expanding access. No

longer would college be just for the wealthy, but it would now include minorities, lower income groups and those who had marginal academic achievements (Cohen & Brawer). Community colleges have also initiated shifts in higher education by choosing different institutional emphases. One example is how some community colleges introduced vocational education into the higher education system. This was a real change for the traditionalist who believed that the purpose of attending college was to graduate into the professional job ranks as opposed to simply getting job training (Cohen & Brawer). Today the community college has once again been transformed through expanding workforce initiatives and creation of partnerships with the community, businesses, government and universities.

There are critics who suggest that community colleges going through so much change have lost their way, abandoning missions in an attempt to “be all things to all people” (Bailey & Averianova, 1999, p. 1). However, advocates of the community college see the continuing evolution of the colleges and their expanding missions as part of the growth and logical next step in the rich history of the community college movement (Manzo, 2001). Yet, critics see current changes such as the baccalaureate movement as dangerous and moving totally away from the core mission and values of the colleges (Manzo, 2001). Critics and proponents alike agree that “society looks to community colleges to provide special access to higher education for many people who face economic and social problems” (Bailey & Averianova, 1999, p. 1). This special access to higher education continues to be met and extended by community college

innovations such as partnerships and establishment of four-year degree programs (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005).

Innovation

The concept of innovation in the literature on higher education has provided insights into innovative processes and outcomes within the academic enterprise (Cerych & Sabatier, 1986; Levine, 1980). The research on innovation, which is the process of making changes to something established by introducing something new, began to grow rapidly in the late 1980s (Van Vught, 1989). The term innovation refers to both radical and incremental changes to products, processes, or services. Rogers (1995) states that innovation “is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (p. 11). According to Amabile (1996), “all innovation begins with creative ideas...creativity by individuals and teams is a starting point for innovation; the first is necessary but not sufficient condition for the second” (pp. 1154-1155). Amabile continued by stating that “creativity is the basis for innovation and innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization” (p. 1155). Distinct from change, innovation has its own body of literature including findings regarding successful innovations in colleges and universities as relevant to the topic of successful and sustainable change in higher education (Lichtenstein, 2000). Research into organizations has emphasized finding the important variables related to the likelihood of organizations becoming innovative.

Historically, academic institutions have been slow to embrace change and innovation. Kerr (1982), for example, observed from an historical perspective that, higher education institutions have hardly changed during the past centuries.

About eighty-five institutions in the Western world established by 1520 still exist in recognizable forms, with similar functions and with unbroken histories. They include the Catholic church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, of Iceland and of Great Britain, several Swiss cantons, and seventy universities. Kings that rule, feudal lords with vassals, and guilds with monopolies are all gone. These seventy universities, however, are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings, with professors and students doing much the same things, and with governance carried on in much the same ways. (p. 152)

Bok (1986) also observed that universities are slow to change. “The most promising innovations can languish within a university unless some effective force causes them to be emulated widely” (p. 176). Clark (1983) indicated that innovations in higher education are mainly incremental adjustments. Incremental adjustments are small steps taken to modify but do not have a major impact (Clark). Major and comprehensive changes are rare, but because of the diffusion of power in the university, such changes are extremely difficult to effect (Clark). While this reluctance to change at the university level has continued, the community colleges have led the way for innovation in higher education. The community colleges have recognized that beyond alignment with an institution’s principles and values, an innovation must be institutionalized and brought

within the institution's boundary. An innovation that is not embedded in an institution will fail (Curry, 1992; Levine, 1980).

While universities have trouble being creative and making major changes, community colleges have always been known for their ability to be innovative. Johnson (1964) expanded on the innovations that community colleges brought to the forefront of education at that time. These innovations included, for example, the use of television, learning resource centers, and work study programs. Today these innovations include certificate programs, workforce development, corporate training and partnerships with business and industry along with universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2002). Certificate programs, workforce development and corporate training are all programs in which community colleges have worked with businesses to help retool their employees to meet the needs of today's society (Cohen & Brawer).

The League for Innovation in the Community College is an international organization dedicated to advocating the community college movement. According to *Change* magazine (1998), the League is the most dynamic organization in the community college world. Since 1968, the League has been the only international organization committed to improving community colleges through institutional innovation, experimentation, and institution transformation (League for Innovation, 2006). The League and its member-institutions develop best practices from innovative ideas that are shared from a network of community colleges throughout the nation. These best practices are then disseminated to all member institutions who may choose to implement new

programs. In the past decade, some of these best practices have included partnerships and workforce initiatives.

Innovations and change in community colleges are discussed by Fullan (1993), who posited that the individual is key to the entire change process in education. Fullan challenged educators to become change agents and to work toward the ultimate goal of producing a learning society (Fullan). In order to create a learning society it is important to have educational opportunities that are readily available within a given community. One way to do this is through partnership centers. Partnership centers are a collaborative arrangement between two and four-year institutions (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005). Even though the literature reflects more on the business model of partnerships, Dent (1999) wrote that partnerships are effective for several reasons, including expanding resources, reducing expenses and improving relationships.

Fincher (2002), commented on the historic, competitive nature of higher education learning institutions, and observed that with the ever-changing marketplace, an institution would be strengthened through strategic alliances that addressed challenges in the economic environment. Since resources of all kinds but predominantly financial are getting more scarce through federal and state budget cutbacks, it is important for universities to be more efficient with their resources by collaborating with a partner in order to stay competitive with those institutions that may not be in the same situation. Fincher also cited the relationship between community colleges and universities as an example of effective partnering. Armstrong (2001) also concurred that institutions need to look for ways to break out of their antediluvian mindsets or risk not surviving in the

rapidly changing evolution of higher education. This can be done through effective partnerships.

Partnerships in Higher Education

A review of the literature pertaining to partnerships in higher education can be traced back to the oldest universities in Europe when the universities and towns worked together on a model of success (Pedersen, 1997). Since that time, partnerships have evolved to mean many different things, including university and college partnerships with the community, business and other educational entities, as well as collaborative, cooperative, and consortial agreements and endeavors. Helping in this transformation of partnerships in education was the development of the community college system.

When the American community college system was founded in 1902 at Joliet Junior College in Illinois, partnership took on a new meaning between levels of higher educational institutions. The new meaning of partnership involved a new relationship between community colleges and universities based on the ability of community college students to transfer directly to four-year universities (O'Banion, 1997). As the community college has evolved, one of its main trademarks has been its ability to form partnerships with the community to respond quickly to educational needs of business and industry (Milliron & de los Santos, 2004). Gleazer (1994) contended that "the community college is uniquely qualified to become the nexus of a community learning system, relating organizations with educational functions into a complex sufficient to respond to the population's learning needs" (p. 10). Programs such as workforce initiatives, corporate training and certificate programs are all examples of what Milliron and de los

Santos along with Gleazer were indicating. Universal access to higher education became another trademark of community college expansion (O'Banion, 1997). There was extensive collaboration during the 1960s and early 1970s, as institutions looked for a quick and reliable means to boost enrollment (Neal, 1988).

Collaboration was also occurring during the 1980s when the economy was in a downturn and the colleges needed to create cost effective means for providing all levels of education, including associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degrees along with certificate and workforce initiatives (Pritzen, 1988). This momentum of collaboration and eventual partnerships continued into the early 1990s as a way to increase and create a seamless transfer system for community college students (Cejda, 1999). To further expand access for everyone, community colleges in the early 1990's also began initiating partnerships with universities to open doors to higher education for the ever-expanding base of potential students.

Prather and Carlson (1994) were among the first researchers to study partnerships. They found that while partnerships could vary in size and complexity, they were created most frequently in response to excessive commuting distances, dominant transfer patterns, or when the number of four-year institutions were restricted by the states. Their study was one of the first to point out that a community college could show access needs for higher educational opportunities by creating a partnership center model. Since this first study, others have also pointed out that university center models can be classified differently, whether by facility, location, governance, number of partners and types of delivery systems, but the fact remains that they demonstrate and fulfill a need for

students who want to continue their education (Cook, 2000; Kent, 2002; Prather & Carlson, 1994). Lorenzo (2005) has reviewed six types of partnership center models:

1. The Co-Location Model - is where two and four-year institutions deliver the degree programs in the same physical location. This could be the community college campus, but could also be at a different location. The model is set up where the university and community college are jointly renting space.
2. The Enterprise Model - is where multiple institutions form a consortium to develop and operate a higher-education center, usually in an area of the state that does not have access to higher education. The community college becomes a joint-venture partner and is given the strongest role in operations, finance, and programming.
3. The Virtual Model - While similar to the campus-based university centers model, all upper-division coursework is offered on-line instead of at an on-site location. The community college partner still plays a role in this model through proctoring of tests along with serving other needs that may arise for the baccalaureate student.
4. The Integrated Model - This is where the two and four-year programs and related student services are seamless and there is no difference that can be observed between the students at the different degree levels. This model lends itself best to one university working with one community college.

5. The Sponsorship Model - This is where the community college takes the lead role in developing and operating the university center and determines which degrees will be offered. The two-year college owns and operates the facilities and has a full time staff that seeks out programs from the universities and then helps to maintain as well as recruit for the variety of programs.
6. The Hybrid Model - This model combines university center programming with community college authority to grant baccalaureate degrees. This hybrid approach creates more options that may not have existed before the community college was given four-year degree granting ability.

When the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College began, it was classified as part of the sponsorship model. While the center continues to be administered as though it is in the sponsorship model, Lorenzo (2005) now classifies this style of partnership as hybrid since St. Petersburg College was legislated the authority to grant baccalaureate degrees. In many instances the hybrid model could mean the demise of a partnership center, due to the new four-year college not wanting any competition. However, at St. Petersburg College the University Partnership Center and the four-year programs will continue to coexist because of the complementary nature of the different degree program opportunities, as well as the continuum of educational opportunities made available by partnering with institutions that offer graduate degrees that articulate with undergraduate programs (S. Fell, personal communication, April 9, 2006).

University and community college partnerships have expanded dramatically in the last 15 years, especially in the area of transfer students who expect smooth transitions from lower division to upper division. Florida was one of the first states in the early 1970's to create a statute that made it mandatory for any Associate of Arts degree recipient from a Florida community college to be able to automatically transfer to a Florida state university (Florida Department of Education, 2006). This created a seamless system for higher education allowing graduates from the community college to transfer directly into a four-year institution.

Whetten (1981), who discussed partnerships, observed that “institutional decision makers must believe the expected benefits of collaboration in some way offset the added costs in time and money” (p. 5). He also suggested that the decision about partnerships becomes a key determinant to the long term success of the institution. It is suggested that partnerships may sometimes change the goals or missions of an institution and, therefore, need to be analyzed carefully before an institution enters into one.

In order for partnerships between community colleges and universities to work, Patterson (1974) concluded that traditional belief in institutional autonomy must be shared to have effective college-university cooperation. This would allow institutions to move forward in partnership without having the partner-institution involved in the decision making process of the other institution. Neal (1988) agreed, citing that cooperation between colleges and universities create stronger academic programs with no loss of autonomy, because each institution is still governing itself. Patterson developed a framework to help guide cooperative partnership arrangements, including improving the

quality of education available to students, reducing duplication of programming and redundancy of facilities, and demonstrating the ability to respond to the changing needs of the community.

Politically and economically the 1990s seemed to favor university centers. In the early part of that decade the economy was declining and more individuals were returning to college (C. Justice, personal communication, March 6, 2006). The political tone was one of despair as federal and state budgets were being cut. Yet, in Florida and other states, there was a need to create more access for those individuals who were returning to or starting college without creating additional budget problems. The state legislature in Florida did not want to invest money into bricks and mortar to build new colleges, so it looked for other ways in which to create access without a big financial commitment (D. Sullivan, personal communication, March 5, 2006). The Florida legislature's solution was to create partnerships so that universities would work cooperatively with the community colleges by putting the university's four-year programs on the community college campus. This would be more sensible than having a power struggle with the universities over community colleges offering four-year degrees of their own (Haynes, 2001). Partnering with universities also made more financial sense for the community colleges as most colleges did not have the financial resources to offer programs that were as academically challenging, accredited, and credible as those at traditional four-year institutions (Brophy, 2000).

In 1999 St. Petersburg Junior College created its own University Partnership Center. The college looked at this type of innovation and partnership as an expansion of

its existing mission (C. Copenhagen, personal communication, March 6, 2006). In fact, a review of St. Petersburg College history will illustrate that the founder of the college stated back in 1927 that he established the college with the intention that it would become a four-year institution.

History of St. Petersburg College

St. Petersburg Junior College was founded in 1927 by Captain George M. Lynch, Pinellas County's city superintendent of public schools. It was created as a private, nonprofit corporation to help meet the needs of Florida's growing population and to provide students with limited resources local access to higher education. In Florida the nation's Great Depression of the 1930s had come early. In the mid 1920's families of many high school graduates in Florida suddenly found going away to college to be beyond their means (Morris, 1989).

The College was founded to enable students to live at home, pay low tuition, work and still pursue a higher education (O'Keefe, 2000). The 1928 charter application to the State of Florida listed the following goals:

To found, maintain and conduct a scientific institution of learning;
having a department of fine arts; and such other departments as from time to time may be added in accordance with the provisions of the by-laws;
to own, buy, sell and mortgage real estate and personal property and to use all income derived there from in its work and not for the benefit of the members of said Corporation.

A group of local citizens, led by Captain Lynch, who would become the College's first president, signed the charter application. They were L. Chauncey Brown, publisher of St. Petersburg's Evening Independent newspaper; Frederick R. Francke, a Florida Power Corporation executive; Frank N. Robinson, an insurance executive; George W. Wylie, an attorney; and Robert R. Walden, a merchant. Together with Mrs. H.C. Case, a Pinellas County trustee, they made up the founding Board of Governors (O'Keefe, 2000). The Board members demonstrated their dedication to this project by signing personal bank notes guaranteeing expenses until tuition could be collected. SPJC also received \$15,000 from the cities Advertising and Library Board. It is important to note that all of these individuals were well educated and involved citizens, representing the economic, workforce and cultural sectors of the community. Therefore, they had a strong interest in the mission of SPJC and how the college would be structured, including the desire, as stated in the first mission statement, to eventually become a four-year institution.

The corporate affairs of SPJC were managed by Board members until the first election, when Brown was named board president. At this time Francke was named vice president; Robinson was named treasurer, and Wylie was named secretary. Lynch, who eventually rose to county superintendent, remained president of the College until his death in 1935. At that time Robert B. Reed, whom Lynch had selected as dean of the College, was appointed by the board as the second president. G.V. Fugitt succeeded Lynch as county superintendent. Thus, the informal relationship between the College and the Pinellas County Schools continued (O'Keefe, 2000). This relationship between the college and the schools would become extremely important in future years as the college

would need the endorsement of the Pinellas County Schools to expand its mission (C. Kuttler, personal communication, March 6, 2006).

To establish a direction for the future institution, advice was sought from educators at the University of Florida regarding the type of college to be created. They suggested a two-year college, indicating that it would be less expensive to operate than a four-year institution. Lynch and the board concurred, but held onto the idea that SPJC would become a four-year college as soon as it was financially feasible. In the 1927 catalog, the goal of the College read as follows:

...to afford opportunity to the young men and young women of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County who have completed the 12th grade course of study, to continue a two-year program of study of college grade, leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science. Non-resident students will be admitted upon certificate showing that they are living with their parents, legal guardians or relatives. (p. 2)

Over the next 60 years SPJC continued to integrate itself into the community and culture of Pinellas County, expanding sites from north to south in Pinellas County. This included, the furthest southern campus, the St. Petersburg campus and the most northern site Tarpon Springs. The sites continued to grow in student enrollment.

The District Board of Trustees, in 1987, adopted a new mission statement that confirmed SPJC as a comprehensive, open-door institution with a policy of providing quality educational experiences to a diverse student body and community (O'Keefe,

2000). The original goal of the College as a transfer institution continued, as did the goals previously established concerning the preparation of students for entry into a job or career, the upgrading of students' occupational skills, and the strengthening of their basic academic skills. Additionally, the mission statement addressed the need for flexibility and innovation in the way services were provided, the integration of educational goals into lifelong learning, and the encouragement of minority students to utilize the College's available resources and opportunities (J. Morehead, personal communication, March 5, 2006).

Ten years later, in November 1998, a roundtable was convened. Meeting at the Bilmar Beach Resort on Treasure Island, the conferees turned their attention to "Focus on Learning: Planning the Community College for the 21st century." Implicit in the theme was the idea that faculty must come to regard themselves more as learning guides and less as their old image as teaching authorities (C. Copenhaver, personal communication, April 4, 2006). Also discussed was the community college of the 21st Century and the idea of partnerships, technology, and the potential of offering four-year degrees (K. Adkins, personal communication, March 6, 2006). Among the presenters were Denver Community College President Byron McClenny, Vice President Kay M. McClenny of the Education Commission of the States, North Seattle Community College's Rita Smilkstein, prominent Florida architect David Harper and Visions Inc. President James Riskowski, head of one of the nation's leading educational technology consultancies.

In 1999 the Florida legislature identified the need to have an increased number of baccalaureate programs accredited and offered by other accredited partner colleges and

universities on community college campuses as a method to address baccalaureate access (Jones, D, personal communication, February 10, 2006). SPJC accepted the legislatures challenge and started its College University Center (later to be renamed the University Partnership Center) in March of 1999.

In 2001 the legislature decided to grant SPJC the authority to offer limited baccalaureate degrees. In the same legislation SPJC changed its name to St. Petersburg College (SPC). As Florida's oldest two-year community college, SPC has a current spring 2006 two-year student enrollment of 30,000-plus credit students (O'Keefe, 2006). While largely a transfer institution, the college has a large number of allied health, workforce programs, and other programs that one would anticipate finding at a comprehensive community college. It currently has 1000-plus credit students in its four-year programs (O'Keefe).

The University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College

In 1997, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC), among others, identified a need for increased access to baccalaureate level education in the State of Florida. In Pinellas County, by far the most densely populated county in Florida (Pinellas County Government website), there was an additional need to have opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate studies at times and locations convenient to an adult population working full-time. At the same time, PEPC, the State Board of Community Colleges, and the Board of Regents were sounding the alarm about the large numbers of new students Florida could expect as the baby boomlet works its way through the elementary, high schools, and community colleges.

The Florida Distance Learning Institute called for exploring the use of community colleges as “learning centers.” In addition, community colleges were experiencing growing numbers of students seeking new career opportunities requiring additional work at the baccalaureate and graduate level. While the demand was building statewide, St. Petersburg Junior College (SPJC) was creating a high-technology learning center, located near the geographic population center of Pinellas County, Florida for the purpose of establishing a hub for distance and other “flexible access/delivery” and technology-enhanced learning. In addition to its technology focus, the Seminole campus of SPJC was SPJC’s “beta” campus – a place to experiment with new educational and service models in terms of content, equipment and delivery. The Seminole Campus had the technological design and infrastructure, the land, the financial resources and the entrepreneurial spirit to offer its community and beyond an array of educational programs exceeding the norms of conventional facilities. The Seminole Campus was already, in 1998, using technology and distance learning to meet the growing demands for “any time, any place,” learning paradigms.

Another issue that was factored into the creation of the partnership center at the Seminole campus was meeting the demands of a diverse community and student population. Pinellas County has 928,000 residents and only 28% have bachelor’s degrees (Pinellas County Government website). Although diversity is defined on many dimensions, the partnership center would look to meet the demands of racial/ethnic diversity as well as socioeconomic diversity through the different programs and universities that it would partner with.

Given this unique set of conditions, and taking into account both the campus environment and countywide needs, the concept of the St. Petersburg College University Center (later to be known as the University Partnership Center) was born. Simply stated, universities and four-year colleges would be invited to offer upper-division and graduate work at or through the SPJC Seminole Campus. Programs would be selected based on a university's recognized reputation in an academic area and programs which are complementary with program offerings at SPJC (for example, the University of Florida in the agriculture area) and/or the ability to offer the program via distance learning (an example being Florida Gulf Coast University in criminal justice). SPJC had already been approached by Florida State University (in partnership with the British Open University and Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University specialized upper-division work in technology and architecture) to explore creative variations on the College University Center option.

One method of delivery is for the university to utilize existing college facilities. As envisioned, delivery of programs would be extended throughout the county to other SPJC institutional sites, to include three full-service campuses, as well as two special purpose centers and other technology-equipped sites. The College University Center did not require a physical presence apart from what was already planned at Seminole. Participating universities and colleges would use the interactive television classrooms, computer labs and the intercampus network to deliver courses throughout the county. Students would do independent academic work and access services in the Campus' Information Commons. The Commons is synergistic by combining multiple functions in

a single space: a library where students access information resources from around the world via the Internet; a classroom where students interact with their professors, other students and course materials on-line; and a student service center for electronic admissions, counseling, registration and testing. This approach is a consortium without walls outside of existing SPJC structures.

An alternative approach is for the university to construct additional offices and/or classroom/lab facilities for the purposes of offering at least some of the instruction and services on-site. One example of a community college already doing this was in Texas at North Harris-Montgomery Community College District, which had forged a partnership with six universities and had built a \$12 million, 78,000 square foot multi-media-rich building to house the programs (North Harris Montgomery Community College, 2006).

Under either scenario, or other variations that could be identified in the future, the UPC at SPJC offered a cost-effective, creative solution to addressing the new educational paradigm and providing for upper-division and graduate work at the Seminole Campus and county-wide through the SPJC telecommunications hub.

Chapter Summary

The literature review which constitutes Chapter Two introduced the concepts and constructs in the literature which pertained to the topic of this study. Through this in depth review of the literature it can be seen that in order for SPC to become innovative with partnerships and later with its four-year degrees, it required transformational leadership to navigate the organizational changes required to implement the desired innovation. The framework of these two theories, organizational change and

transformational leadership, were discussed in depth. Understanding how the leaders perceive the experience of transforming SPC from a two-year to four-year institution will add profound knowledge to benefit others who may attempt the same strategy. Next, the role of community colleges in higher education was presented, followed by a discussion of innovation in higher education, and specifically partnerships as innovation. The University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College was the context through which these constructs were reviewed.

In completing this extensive review of the literature on this topic, several things became apparent: (1) Community colleges are by nature innovative and have the ability to change to meet their communities' desires; (2) in order for a community college to be innovative, the use of organizational change and transformational leadership theories are necessary to create a successful change; and, (3) the University Partnership Center is a new phenomenon and there has not been many studies that have addressed this concept, and no studies that have addressed the use of a UPC to help create the case for a community college to offer four-year degree programs.

Also evident was that the Florida higher education system was in need of finding creative ways to deal with the large numbers of new students that are expected to enroll in colleges and universities as the baby boomlet works its way through the elementary, high schools, and community colleges. With the UPC at SPC building a national model and other community colleges in Florida following their example, more opportunities now exist for students to further their education.

This study, by harnessing the expert knowledge of those who participated in the experience, contributes a body of knowledge to the discipline and provides greater insight and understanding of this phenomenon.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodology and research design that will be used in this study. The chapter includes the research design along with an explanation of the reasoning for choosing the research framework. Also identified in this chapter are the population and sample, along with the research question that was utilized to guide this study. Methods for data collection and analysis are also be discussed. The last section of the chapter explores the various methods used to ensure the study's findings are accurate and ethical.

This qualitative case study explores a specific research question in order to gain a better understanding of the role the University Partnership Center (UPC) had in transforming St. Petersburg College (SPC) to a four-year college. This study tells the story of how the UPC at SPC served as the impetus for SPC to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees.

Philosophical Framework

One of the critical decisions to be made in designing a research study is establishing a philosophical or ideological perspective that determines the framework within which a researches work will be grounded (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). The philosophical framework that guides this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology is “the exploration of how human beings make sense of experiences and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002,

p. 104). Phenomenology can be used in qualitative research as both a tradition and a philosophy (Patton). For the purposes of this study, phenomenology was used as a philosophy because the researcher paid attention to specific instances of the phenomenon that point toward more general qualities and characteristics that accurately describe the essential nature of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). Phenomenology, which began as a movement in philosophy, deals with the essences of objects or phenomena as they present themselves in human consciousness. The founding father of phenomenology, Husserl, believed that through rigorous examination of objects as they are presented in one's consciousness, a person could come to intuitively know the essence of those objectivities or realities (Moustakas, 2001).

There are several phenomenological movements and traditions that may be distinguished including Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre's existential forms of phenomenology, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, Blanchot's linguistical phenomenology, Scheler's ethical phenomenology, and Schutz's social phenomenology (Schwandt, 2001). This list of orientations is not necessarily complete. But these are designations that seem to reoccur throughout the philosophical and phenomenological literature. While it is important to note these movements and traditions as relevant in qualitative research, I will only focus on theories relevant to this research.

As this study emphasizes those individuals who shared the lived experience in creating and establishing the University Partnership Center (UPC) as a basis for transforming St. Petersburg College (SPC) into a four-year college, a discussion of

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is relevant. According to Moustakas (2001), Husserl's transcendental approach has the researcher setting aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated. The research relies on imagination, intuition, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience and uses systematic methods of analysis as advanced by Moustakas.

There are five philosophical assumptions embedded in phenomenology that helps guide this study. They are the ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions. In phenomenology, the ontological inquiry, or the value of reality, refers to multiple realities that exist and are developed by the researcher (Creswell, 1994; Patton, 2002). Heidegger (1962) described ontology as the phenomenology of being, while Schwandt (2001) indicates that ontology is ultimately concerned with the question of human existences. Therefore, the words of the participants as they shared the reality of their experiences of being part of the creation of the University Partnership Center were used in order to create a composite of the phenomenon. As a social constructionist I hold the view that reality is an ongoing, dynamic process; reality is reproduced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it (Creswell). As the researcher, I reported this reality and relied on the interviewee's voices and interpretations in the research findings (Creswell).

Epistemology concerns the nature, origins, and limits of knowledge (Slife & Williams, 1995). In phenomenology, the epistemological assumption is that the relationship between the participants and the researcher is one of engagement in a collaborative process, and the researcher spends time in the field (Creswell, 2003). In that

regard, I spent time with the participants in their environment which helped shift my role from an outsider to that of an insider, making the process more collaborative as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The third philosophical assumption is the axiological assumption. Axiological refers to the study of values in research, and is where the researcher acknowledges that biases are present because in research the values of the perception of others is value-laden (Creswell). I admit the value-laden nature of this research and actively report my biases as well as the value-laden nature of the data collected. Rhetorical, the fourth philosophical assumption, refers to the presentation of the findings which are a full and rich narrative description (Creswell). The rhetorical approach is the personal approach to writing the narrative. I collected the words of the participants and, through written reports, detailed their experiences with the creation of the UPC.

The fifth philosophical assumption is the methodological stance that the researcher takes. Creswell (2003) described the phenomenological assumption of methodology as inductive, growing from specific to general in response and continually being revised and emerging. Since the purpose of this study was to examine a unique phenomenon about which little was known, an inductive approach was necessary. I described details of the case and its setting before explaining more abstract themes. The discussion section, based upon the data obtained, includes recommendations on how other community college leaders may use a partnership center to help develop their institution into a four-year degree granting college.

There are several types of methodological frameworks that can be used for conducting a research study. The three primary methods that are most often used are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It is the philosophical framework and its embedded assumptions, along with the purpose of the study, that guide the choice of method; therefore, I will next discuss the rationale for choosing the qualitative research approach for my study.

Rationale for the Use of Qualitative Methods

There has been a long debate over the legitimacy of quantitative methods versus qualitative methods. Until recently, quantitative research was used more frequently in studies; however, qualitative methods have become accepted as a legitimate alternative to traditional empirical methods (Slife & Williams, 1995). This pattern shift is related to researchers finding pertinent uses of qualitative research (Shank & Villella, 2004).

Qualitative data is information gathered with methods that are personal, direct, and open-ended, and allows responses to be free flowing without restraints (Creswell, 1998). The quantitative researcher views the world and its events as an objective reality apart from the beliefs of individuals; the qualitative researcher believes that one can identify reasons and explanations based on the perceptions of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon (Creswell). Qualitative research has been described as *verstehen* or *understanding* by Patton (2002). The *verstehen* or *understanding* approach to scientific inquiry is based on the application of critical intelligence to social phenomena without relying entirely on the abstraction of numerical representation (Patton).

Qualitative research seeks to describe and explain the particular phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In qualitative research, the questions and problems are usually derived from real-world observations, dilemmas, and questions, and take the form of wide-ranging inquiries (Marshall & Rossman). Qualitative research produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). A study that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a social phenomenon naturally lends itself to qualitative types of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Furthermore, the most effective strategy to ascertain the in-depth perspectives of others is through qualitative interviewing (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research methods acknowledge that the experience of individuals is important and valid, and brings to light data that were previously averaged away or simply never considered by quantitative methods (Creswell, 1998).

In this study, I explore the role of the UPC at SPC in transforming SPC into a four-year college. The purpose of this study is to tell the story of how the UPC at SPC served as the impetus for SPC to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees. This type of in-depth study of the perspectives of others naturally lends itself to qualitative research. In regard to this case study, the usefulness of gathering data on UPCs by integrating the limited amount of information already available from the various related disciplines serves to advance the development of a model for other colleges. Such a model may also serve as a baseline and a contextual framework for the development of future research hypotheses. In sum, this study attempts to understand the

phenomenon of the partnership center transforming a college through case study interviews of those who were directly involved.

Rationale for the Use of Case Study

The qualitative case study design is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon that brings one to an understanding of a complex issue (Yin, 2003). Some researchers think of case study as the object to be studied (Stake, 2000), while others define case study as a process of investigation (Creswell, 2003). Case studies can be particularly useful for studying a process, program, or individual in an in-depth, holistic way that allows for deep understanding (Merriam, 1998). It expands the reader's experiences through offering insights and by illuminating meanings. These insights may be used as tentative hypotheses that help guide future research; therefore, a case study plays a vital role in advancing a discipline's knowledge base. Yin (2003) defined the case study research method as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Stake and Merriam agreed that the case is a bounded, integrated system.

Case study is particularly useful in applied fields of study such as education, particularly when studying educational innovations (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Through the use of case study when examining educational programs, outcomes can help improve educational practices. In this study I looked at the UPC and how it was able to transform SPC into a four-year institution. This study

concentrated upon a single phenomenon and described the phenomenon in depth (Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative inquiry “assumes that each case is special and unique” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). The UPC is unique in that it was created in order to show a need for higher education in Pinellas County, Florida, which in turn could transform SPC into a four-year institution. Therefore, the researcher studied this educational phenomenon through the experience of this one example with the goal of gaining meaningful insights into how others may use this model.

Research Question

Case study research generally answers one or more questions (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin 2003). The questions are targeted to a limited number of events or conditions and their inter-relationships (Creswell, 1998). The overarching research question that will guide this study is:

What was the role of the University Partnership Center in transforming St. Petersburg College to a four-year college?

Methodology

Role of the Researcher

The credibility of qualitative research hinges on the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher in the field (Patton, 2002). In using case study as the tradition, I concentrated, on a single phenomenon as recommended by Berg (2001), and uncovered the manifest interaction of significant factors characteristic of this phenomenon. One of the key strengths of the case study method involves the use of multiple data-gathering

techniques, and as Creswell (1998) stated, it is important to determine in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research question. Data was gathered by thoroughly reviewing the literature, by interviewing participants, and by examining historical documents, all appropriate methods for case study (Yin, 2003). “Observations take place in real-world settings and people are interviewed with open-ended questions in places and under conditions that are comfortable for and familiar to them” (Patton, p. 39). In addition, I attempted, as Berg stated, to capture various nuances, patterns, and other elements that other research approaches might overlook. This was accomplished by asking good questions, being a good listener, not being trapped by my own ideologies, being adaptive, having a firm grasp of the issues, and being unbiased, as recommended by Yin (2003).

Researcher Bias

The UPC at SPC is interesting to study due to the unique entity that was established and how that entity helped transform SPC into a four-year institution. As the vice president in charge of the UPC at SPC, I am one of the leaders who experienced the phenomena. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify potential bias (Creswell, 2003). In order to reduce any bias or pre-conceived assumptions that I hold, I used bracketing. Bracketing is a phenomenological technique also referred to as *epoché* in which the researcher acknowledges and reports his own perspective on the phenomenon or participants, and then attempts to suspend or hold in abeyance any preconceptions or biases that might influence the gathering, analyzing, or interpreting of the data (Aigen,

1995). This enables the researcher to analyze the data without trying to confirm his own presuppositions (Appleton, 1995; Clarke, 1999).

Sample Selection

One key feature of qualitative inquiry is working with a small sample of people (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is also important to set boundaries within qualitative case study research in order to define areas of a case that can be studied within the limits of one's time and means (Miles & Huberman). Participants for this qualitative research case study were selected based on having experienced the phenomenon as one of the originators of the UPC at SPC. A purposive sample was chosen for this case study research. Purposive samples are described by Morse and Field (1996) and Holloway and Wheeler (1997) as samples derived from the need to obtain specific information from specific individuals.

Purposive sampling is also called theoretical sampling by Strauss and Corbin (1998) due to its conceptually driven nature, and is the method of choice in case study research (Berg, 2001). According to Merriam (1998), the researcher needs to select a case or sample from which the most can be learned. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 169). Therefore, purposive sampling was the most appropriate sampling technique for this case study.

The sample for this case study is the five individuals who played a role in creating the UPC at SPC. All five participants informally expressed an interest in participating in this study. Also, permission was received from SPC to conduct this study.

Instruments

There are three major components of qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They are “the data, the procedures used to interpret and organize the data, and the written and verbal reports of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 11). In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2002), and in this study I was the instrument of the data collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation, as well as the creator of the written and verbal reports of the findings.

As the instrument, I remained responsive to “both the environment and to the persons who occupy the environment” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 129). The potential of the human as instrument “is imbedded in the ability of human beings to be observers, categorizers, and processors of many forms of data: verbal, nonverbal, environmental, social, and contextual” (p. 150). As the primary data collection instrument, I was sensitive to the people being interviewed, the process, and the topic. This sensitivity permitted me to develop “a contextual, holistic sense of the situation” (p. 133) as I became immersed in the surroundings of the phenomenon.

Immersion into the phenomenon began with the literature review and continued through every stage of the data gathering. Data collection for this study included an analysis of related documents and records, and standardized interviews with the five individuals who played a leadership role in creating the UPC.

Data Collection and Processing Procedures

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) indicated that qualitative interviews may be used either as the primary strategy for data collection, or in conjunction with observation, document

analysis, or other techniques. In using the interview technique, open-ended questions are used to allow for individual variations. There are three types of qualitative interviewing: informal conversational interviews, semi-structured interviews, and standardized, open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002). For this study, a standardized, open-ended interview was used, which allowed me to gain the most useful information for this study to answer the research question.

Another source of data that was collected and is invaluable to a qualitative study is that of documents. Documents may include official records, proposals, emails, phone logs, and reports, as well as published data that may be found in the literature review (Creswell, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Yin 2003). In this study, proposals, written memos by the participants, and newspaper articles were used in addition to interviews.

For this study I conducted, audio taped, and transcribed interviews with individuals who played a role in creating the UPC as well as transitioning SPC to a four-year institution. I developed a set of predetermined, open-ended questions (see Appendix A) for the structured interviews. As Patton (2002) noted, the questions must be carefully and fully worded prior to the interview. I arranged the interviews to be convenient for the interviewee and located in a quiet, private location. The interview was conducted face-to-face. After introductions and the statement and acceptance of the terms of the informed consent, the formal interview began. The interview was recorded, allowing the researcher to focus on the interview process, including observing the interviewee's nonverbal gestures. The formal interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. After transcribing each

interview, I emailed the transcript to the interviewee, who reviewed it and sent it back to me asking for changes or acknowledging that the transcript is accurate. The total time commitment for the interviewee was less than two hours and included communication with the interviewer, the interview itself, the follow-up reading of the transcript, and any clarification of new points that occurred after all the interviewing was completed.

To conduct this study I requested and received a letter of approval from St. Petersburg College's IRB chair Dr. Carol Copenhaver (see Appendix B). This letter states that the IRB at St. Petersburg College gave its approval for this study to be conducted. The five interviewees were asked separately and in-person if they would participate in this study. At that time I gave each of them a formal letter requesting their participation (see Appendix C). Once the five interviewees agreed to participate and a date and time was established for each interview, the interviewee was asked to sign the Barry University IRB Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D). While I have a collegial relationship with these individuals and we are all part of the senior management team at SPC, they hold higher level positions. As stated in the letter and consent form, however, our relationships were not compromised by the interview process.

Data collection took four to six weeks including securing and setting up of the interviews, the interviews themselves, and having interviewees look over the transcripts and answer follow up questions. During that same time, documentation that supports and illuminates data relative to the establishment of the UPC was collected.

As suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), and Rubin and Rubin (2005), pseudonyms were created for participants to protect their identity. To further ensure

confidentiality, transcripts, audiotapes, and other potential identifying pieces of information were kept in separate places under lock and key. Data record keeping is in compliance with Barry University IRB regulations. This includes keeping identifiers that link research participants to the data in separate places. It also includes separating signed consent forms from the data. Data, codes, audiotapes, and any other identifiers will be locked in file cabinets at separate locations and kept for five years. After five years, all information related to this study will be destroyed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 145). Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data (Patton, 2002). Data analysis also involves the identification of basic knowledge objects within a protocol, usually a transcript. Therefore, upon completion of an interview, I transcribed the audiotape verbatim, then listened to the audiotape and looked at the transcript for further understanding and clarification from the participant. According to Yin (2003), data analysis includes examining, categorizing, tabulating, and testing, in order to address the initial propositions of the study. Rubin and Rubin (2005) indicated that recognition is the first stage of analysis where one looks for concepts, themes, events, and topical markers in the interview. Through the use of these categories and themes, the research question was answered and the findings presented in a narrative form using direct quotes from the

participants. Interview transcripts were analyzed by highlighting all concepts relevant to the study and through the use of coding. Based on the review of the literature a preliminary coding scheme was developed and this coding scheme was applied to the data collected through the interview process. During the coding process the preliminary coding scheme was redefined, omitting and adding items as appropriate based on the data. Categories created from transcripts were differentiated by using a color-coded system. Table 3.1 details the data analysis procedures for this study. Information or themes that emerged beyond the original categories were made into a separate list for evaluation. Then, concepts and themes were organized by creating a matrix and an outline for writing the results section.

Findings that emerged from the data are presented in Chapter Four according to themes, resulting in answering the research question. Using descriptions and direct quotes from the participants I was able to illustrate and explain the phenomenon. Additionally, because of my own experience and participation in the phenomenon, I provided insights and unique interpretations in answering the research question. One key feature of the case study tradition is that of lessons learned. These lessons learned are presented in the discussion section of Chapter Five.

Standards of Quality and Verification

Researcher bias is a major threat in qualitative research and attempts were made to minimize bias and enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Efforts were made to meet the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability so that transferability will be achieved (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Table 3.1
Data Analysis Procedures

Step	Procedure	Actions
1.	Review original research questions	a. Review original research questions
2.	Review all data and generate general coding categories	a. Read and reread questionnaires b. Consider emerging themes, concepts, and form broad categories or classifications that represent them c. Sub-divide broad categories into sub-categories d. Use convergent and divergent thinking e. Collapse overlapping categories
3.	Code all data within	a. Assign code number or categories abbreviation to each category b. Develop clear, operational definitions for codes c. Develop master list of coding system d. Code all data e. Refine coding system, collapsing or expanding categories f. Tag important quotes

Step	Procedure	Actions
4.	Sort data within categories	a. Sort data within categories
5.	Resort through categories, looking for emergent patterns	a. Cluster similar data b. Count the number of times data and themes occur c. Look for supporting or contradictory evidence of patterns d. See what data are left out and decide what to do with them
6.	Refine analysis	a. Refine and clarify themes b. Look for verification or contradiction of patterns c. Note relationships between variables d. Identify significant themes e. Draw conclusions f. Make metaphors and analogies
7.	Extract respondents comments	a. Extract respondents comments as “evidence of themes”
8.	Present themes as narrative	a. Cull thick descriptions (quality, not quantity) b. Select supporting quotes

Note: adapted with permission of the author, Stout, K.E (2002)

Credibility

Credibility refers to truth value (validity) and whether truthful and credible findings and interpretations are produced (Schwandt, 2001). Several measures improve credibility. According to Patton (2002), “rigorous methods for collecting high quality clarity of questions, the researcher’s role and status, sampling, use of appropriate recording equipment, and keeping notes and memos (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) did propose one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. That is the use of an “inquiry audit,” in which expert reviewers examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Lincoln & Guba). In this study, I used the inquiry audit to establish dependability and the reviewers are the three distinguished faculty members of my doctoral dissertation committee.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to consistency (reliability) (Schwandt, 2001). It focuses on the process of inquiry and the researcher’s responsibility for ensuring that the research process was consistent, logical, traceable, and documented, while adapting to the changes of the studied environment and to new inputs during the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schwandt). Dependability is enhanced through the clarity of questions, the researcher’s role and status, sampling, use of appropriate recording equipment, and keeping notes and memos (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) did propose one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. That is the use of an “inquiry audit,” in which expert reviewers examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Lincoln & Guba). In this

study, I will use the inquiry audit to establish dependability and the reviewers will be the three distinguished faculty members of my doctoral dissertation committee.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to neutrality (objectivity), and is concerned with establishing the fact that the data and interpretations of that data do not distort the reality they set out to describe and were not merely figments of the researcher's imagination (Schwandt, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to confirmability as the degree to which the researcher can demonstrate the neutrality of the research interpretations, through a "confirmability audit." This means providing an audit trail consisting of 1) raw data; 2) analysis notes; 3) reconstruction and synthesis products; 4) process notes; 5) personal notes; and, 6) preliminary developmental information (Lincoln & Guba). In this study, confirmability was achieved by questioning findings and rethinking and critically reviewing the data.

Transferability

Transferability refers to applicability (generalizability) (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Schwandt, 2001; Stake, 2000). To achieve transferability, a researcher must provide the readers with sufficient information on the study to make it possible for the readers to decide whether the findings are relevant to the situation and applicable to other situations and contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Findings must be understandable to others and be regarded as reasonable (Schwandt). The researcher cannot specify the transferability of findings; he or she can only provide sufficient information that can then be used by the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable to the new situation (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). In order for the reader to determine transferability, details of the phenomenon and demographics of the participants are presented in Chapter Four.

Ethical Considerations

In every study there are various ethical considerations that must be anticipated by the researcher during the research process. I followed the ethical guidelines established by the Barry University Institutional Review Board and recommended by Creswell (2003). As an ethical researcher, I did not let bias enter into my use of language during the writing or interviewing process, and I did not use any inappropriate labeling of individuals. In a qualitative study, anonymity is not possible due to the purposive selection of the sample and the nature of data collection; however, every measure was taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Miles & Huberman 1994; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln, and Rubin and Rubin suggested that various protective measures should be put in place to protect the identity of the research participants; therefore, pseudonyms were created for the participants. To further ensure confidentiality and an ethical study, transcripts, audiotapes, and any other potential identifying pieces of information are stored in separate places under lock and key. Prior to the onset of data collection, each interviewee was asked to read and sign the consent form. They were given a copy of the form for their records. The interviews lasted less than one hour and were audio-taped, transcribed, and later erased. In addition, I informed participants that it would be necessary for them to review the transcripts of their interview and be available to respond to any areas that need clarification.

As the vice president in charge of the UPC at SPC, I am one of the leaders who experienced the phenomena. I also interact on a daily basis with the key players who were involved in this process and were interviewed for this study. While I have a collegial relationship with these individuals and we are all part of the senior management team at SPC, they hold higher level positions. Therefore, there was no threat of coercion. In addition, I made it clear to each participant that their decision to participate or not to participate as well as any responses they provided to interview questions would in no way compromise our professional relationship.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three describes the method used in this study, specifically the assumptions and rationale for the use of a case study qualitative research design. This study focused on the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College and how it was the impetus for changing St. Petersburg College from a two-year college to a 4-year college. The sample consisted of five purposively selected leaders who were directly involved in the creation of the UPC at SPC. Data was collected through the use of structured interviews, including the use of open-ended questions as well as a review of other pertinent documentation. Data analysis procedures and methods verification in the case study tradition were followed. The data collected was analyzed through the use of coding, triangulation, and interpretation by the researcher. Findings were presented in response to the research question. Through the use of deep, rich descriptions, I sought to produce knowledge while establishing trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability within this qualitative study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study focused on the University Partnership Center (UPC) at St. Petersburg College (SPC) and how it became the impetus for transforming St. Petersburg College from a two-year college to a four-year college. A qualitative approach in the case study tradition was used to study this phenomenon. The sample was comprised of five purposively selected leaders, all of whom were directly involved in the creation of the UPC at SPC. Data was collected through the use of structured interviews, including the use of open-ended questions as well as a review of other pertinent documentation. Data analysis procedures and methods verification in the case study tradition were followed. The data collected was analyzed through the use of coding, triangulation, and interpretation. Findings are presented in response to the research question. Through use of deep, rich descriptions, I was seeking to produce knowledge while establishing trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability within this qualitative study.

This chapter presents the demographics of the participants, the findings, and a summary of the data collection process. In order to present the reader with a comprehensive portrait of the phenomenon, findings are presented in their thematic form. Because the participants must be kept confidential, each participant was given a designation of UPC and a randomly assigned number between 1 and 5. The themes fell into the following five areas: access/need, partnership, leadership, organizational change, and success. Through these themes, a story is told that depicts a roadmap of how SPC

created the UPC and how the UPC became the impetus to SPC becoming a four-year college.

Participant Demographics

The participants were five individuals who were involved with both the creation of the UPC and helping SPC to become a four-year institution. The participants were all well-established educators or politicians. All five are currently employed at SPC. On average, each participant has worked three different jobs at SPC. Their length of experience at SPC ranges from 2 years to 40 years. Two of the participants hold professional terminal degrees and the other three hold graduate degrees in education. Two of the five have strong political ties and have either held elective state office or campaigned for elective state office. Each of the participants has had the opportunity, while employed at SPC, to lead some particular segment of the college that has been seen as visionary.

Findings

Access and Need

The Community College system was designed to accommodate the needs of students who desired to remain within the community and access a college education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2006). In Florida, 28 community colleges have been established to open access to higher education and meet the needs of the state's student population. Similar to the national community college system, Florida community colleges are located within a fifty-mile radius of their students. As such,

community colleges are perceived as being more responsive to meeting community needs as compared to universities (Ayers, 2002).

In 1927, St. Petersburg College was established in Pinellas County and for the past 79 years has provided access and opportunity for residents in the county to meet their educational needs at the Associate in Art (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degree levels. Over this period of time, Pinellas County's population has grown to over one million residents and has become the most densely populated county south of Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia (Pinellas County Government website). "This growth in Pinellas County, mostly in mid-county and north-county, meant there was additional need to create more opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate degrees at times and locations convenient to an adult population working full-time" (SPC-Whitepaper, 1998).

A 1997 report by the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) highlighted the need for expanded access to baccalaureate degrees in Florida. The report suggested that new degree offerings should be made available at one location so that a student could remain in one place. The options to increase access included the creation of joint-use facilities between universities and community colleges, creating a state college system, or allowing community colleges to begin four-year programs. Upon receiving the PEPC report, the five participants in this study agreed that each of these options would work in Pinellas County. They also acknowledged that this report gave them the idea and the vehicle with which to move forward with the expansion of St. Petersburg Junior College's mission to meet the need of upper division and graduate education in Pinellas County. According to UPC-2, it was the PEPC report that prompted St. Petersburg

College to evaluate its future and expand its mission. “Upon receiving the report, we already knew that there was a tremendous need in Pinellas County to have expanded access to educational opportunities,” said UPC-3. “We moved at a feverish pace to take the data we already had about the need for greater access in Pinellas and formulated a report that would make us an immediate contender for this mission expansion,” acknowledged UPC-5. “With the knowledge that Pinellas County had the statistics that showed the need for increased access to higher education, we needed to get this message out to our local leaders,” said UPC-4.

Four of the five participants concurred that SPC could rely on its political power to move forward with any of the three options outlined in the PEPC report. With an administrator who was a State Representative and served on the House Appropriations Committee, a local United States Congressman who was chair of the federal budget, and a Pinellas County State Senator who was chair of the Senate appropriations committee. “The stars were aligned for St. Petersburg College to move forward to stake its claim as a college that fit any one of the three criteria laid out in the report,” said UPC-4. The claim could be supported by the fact that SPC had established a track record of successful program development to its credit. As UPC 2 stated:

We had been very successful over the past several years in convincing the Pinellas legislative delegation that SPC could meet challenges in a quick and concise way. The delegation and for that matter most of the legislators and the Governor recognized that SPC had outstanding results in implementing programs that the state mandated.

“There was a sense of, if you want something done and done right, give it to SPC as they have a record of success,” said UPC-1. This belief on the part of the legislature set the foundation for SPC to succeed by showing the need and access issues as the reasoning that would lead to SPC being able to build both the partnership center and later the four-year degree programs.

The SPC leadership team needed to decide which of the three options suggested by PEPC would create the best solution to meet the needs and access issues in Pinellas County. “There was a lot of debate on two of the options, both of which had not been done in Florida and both of which would help solve the access and need questions,” said UPC-5. As UPC-4 stated:

It clearly came down to whether or not the college should stick its neck out and attempt to go all the way by changing its mission to offer baccalaureate degrees or should it take the incremental step of a partnership center that would not be as controversial and could demonstrate the need for greater access in Pinellas County and therefore set the opportunity for future expansion.

“Regardless of which approach we would choose, the bottom line was we knew we would win the argument on need and access issues against any other college who would attempt to challenge us and compete to do the same thing,” said UPC- 2. UPC-2 continued by saying, “there was no question that need and lack of access in Pinellas County was our greatest ace in the hole.” However, in order to be successful with taking two of the options in the PEPC report, the UPC and four-year degree granting status, to the next level, all five participants acknowledged the need and access issues in Pinellas

County could be met with strong leadership from both internal leaders at the college and external leaders from the community.

Leadership

All participants agreed that strong internal and external leadership was the most important factor in SPC's success. "SPC was fortunate to be in a position that we had a long serving President that had shown strong internal leadership, but also had the connections with external leaders that would be helpful in this process," said UPC-3. By 1998, the year the UPC started, the St. Petersburg College's president had already served 20 years. "The President of SPC is known as the entrepreneurial President, it took a strong transitional leader to have the confidence to create a roadmap for changing the college mission," said UPC-4. UPC-3 stated,

I believe that the President's long tenure and previous successes give him the ability and credibility to transform ideas into reality. He also had the ability and experience to understand the culture of the institution, the community, and the state, to believe that incremental transformation would be better than immediate overwhelming transformation by moving all the way to a four-year college.

Throughout the interview process all the participants shared that the President's vision would not stop at just producing a UPC, but that he could see the bigger picture and would be able to have his leadership team buy into the transformation.

"I believe in order to make such a dramatic change within the organization, it took a team of transformational leaders," said UPC-5. All leadership team members were assigned a major role in the implementation of the partnership center, from going to the

different SPC sites and sharing the vision with employees, to working with elected officials in order to gain their commitment. “These leaders had to sell the vision and concept,” said UPC-2 “and that is what they did.” UPC-1 stated,

SPC had a strong transformational leader who had used those skills in establishing the college as cutting edge in many different programs. He also had demonstrated the ability to implement organizational change through expansions of new campuses without much controversy. The expansion of the mission, however, was something that would have greater risk.

In order to be successful, the President recognized the need for external leadership in the community, which included political leaders at all levels of government. “The President had a strong belief that he, along with his team of leaders, could show the leadership necessary to transform the college internally, but he had to obtain the buy-in from the external leaders first,” said UPC-5. The internal leadership team believed that external leaders needed to be cutting edge leaders who could work together to implement change at the local level. Those leaders included one Congressman, one State Senator, and two State Representatives. “In some ways you could say that the politicians who helped us accomplish our initiative were also transformational leaders,” said UPC-4. “Since this idea had never been tried in the State of Florida, the politicians were breaking new ground and creating a new path for higher education delivery in the state,” said UPC-1. All participants agreed that it took real courage from all leaders involved, because internally SPC was changing their mission, and externally the state was redefining how higher education could be delivered.

Three of the five participants believed that if this *redefining the college mission* did not work, the college could lose the credibility it had established over the past 70 years. “As with any leader, there are times when the rubber hits the road and the tough choices and decisions have to be made. This was one of those times that everything seemed to be in place because the need was overwhelming and the college had the entrepreneurial spirit to want to make this happen,” stated UPC-4. Continuing to strategize on the appropriate way to move forward, SPC realized that if they chose the partnership idea that was addressed in the PEPC report it would work better if their regional university were involved with this partnership.

Partnership

It all started with the concept of “Come as you are. Leave linked to your destiny,” stated UPC-1. This concept meant that SPC would provide students the opportunity for upper division education through a partnership center with the same accessibility that SPC provided at the lower division. It would allow students to seek a degree from their chosen university without having to travel to that campus. SPC knew they had the statistics determining need and access on their side, as well as the leadership it would take to be successful, but they also knew that there is strength in numbers and to partner with a major University would only make their case to move forward more convincing. The original concept for the College University Center, later known as the University Partnership Center, was to collaborate with the University of South Florida on a Joint-Use Center. In concept, it was the partnering of “two prestigious and proud institutions of higher learning – St. Petersburg Junior College (1927) and the University of South

Florida (1956) – joining hands to form a partnership to (1) meet degree-access needs of the largest metropolitan county in Florida without a full, public four-year university and (2) to establish a model for cooperation in the delivery of higher education” (SPC/USF Partnership Grant Application, 1998). The mission was to maximize use of existing facilities and to offer more baccalaureate opportunities for students in the Pinellas County area. The grant assigned the University of South Florida the responsibility for delivery of baccalaureate and graduate degree programs on SPC’s Seminole campus. St. Petersburg College would teach the Freshman and Sophomore students on USF’s Bayboro campus. As UPC-2 stated,

SPC wanted to give USF our Seminole campus in order to create more baccalaureate education opportunities. The grant was moving forward as a collaborative effort and at the time, there was no interest on behalf of SPC to get into the four-year business.

According to the SPC-USF grant of 1998, implementation was to consist of two phases. The first phase would cost \$5.5 million. Phase two would cost \$4.5 million. The first phase would cover the modification of existing plans for structures at SPJC and at USF. The second phase would enable the structures to apply the latest technologies providing students greater access to higher education and improved learning modalities. Four of the five interview participants indicated that the parties involved, including USF and SPC, as well as those who would have a say in the outcome of the grant application, had all given indications that the grant would move forward and be approved. However, according to UPC-2, 72 hours before the grant was due, the President of USF called the

President of SPC and used some “very choice words indicating that she thought this was all a ploy to create an opportunity for SPC to eventually offer four-year degrees.” The USF President withdrew from the grant proposal and the grant was lost. As UPC-4 stated, “the war of personalities, if not institutions, had begun.”

Even with the grant lost, the President of SPC continued to move forward with the concept of bringing more baccalaureate degrees to Pinellas County. The President, as UPC-2 said, “brought his leadership team back together and created a new plan of attack.” While the team discussed whether or not the college should offer its own four-year degrees, they decided to build a partnership center on their own in order to offer four-year degrees from higher education institutions. This direction was chosen even though the original SPJC mission, as stated by Captain Lynch, “indicated that the college should be a four-year institution when the financial support was available” (1928 Charter). SPC leaders believed they had sufficient justification to approach the State and Federal Government to ask for funding. According to UPC-1, within the ensuing year \$1.6 million was given to SPC largely because there was a great need in Pinellas County and SPC had the proven track record to provide the justification. Once agreed that the partnership center concept was appropriate, the leadership team had trouble deciding what role, if any, USF should play in this partnership.

The first idea was to allow the partnership center to serve the entire Gulfcoast region; in essence, offering the baccalaureate degree to students who received their AA and AS degrees from any of the nine community colleges in the region. As the 1998 SPC-SRCUC planning document points out, the name was going to be the Southeast

Regional College University Center (SRCUC). According to UPC-4, creating a regional UPC as opposed to a county specific partnership center would have “given SPC’s partnership center a larger, more vast mission that could have upset USF and made all the colleges in the region more nervous as to what this animal would be.” The project would be sold as a demonstration project for other partnership centers at community colleges that would “occur in a major U.S. market (top 12 MSA), where it could serve a region whose demography mirrors that of the U.S. nationwide” (SPC-SRCUC planning document, 1998).

As concepts continued to be debated, including how much involvement USF should have, “the idea of keeping your friends close, but your enemy’s closer prevailed,” said UPC-3. Thus, the concept of bringing USF back into the fold as the primary partner by offering them first right of refusal for any program they already offered and were willing to offer at the UPC was discussed (SPC-white paper, 1998). The reason the decision for bringing USF back in the fold prevailed was that “after USF made it abundantly clear that they did not want to be part of the grant, they would probably refuse to participate in the partnership center,” said UPC-5. In light of previous discussions with USF about participating programs, SPC wanted to invite them to join their new initiative. UPC-1 explained, “by giving USF first right of refusal this would look good to the decision makers (legislators and governor appointees on the state board of education) that SPC was trying to include their regional partner.” “This was a winning formula for SPC as it could move forward with its partnership center, show it was attempting to work

with USF, but in reality could build something that would show that the Pinellas County area had needs and SPC was best suited to meet those needs,” stated UPC- 2.

Through this evolution, SPC was ready to move forward with the basic partnership tenet as stated in the College University white paper: “SPJC wishes to cooperate with all four-year colleges and universities that desire to bring the final two years of undergraduate degrees, entire graduate degrees, and other credit programs to Pinellas County, Florida.” The white paper goes on to state that “these programs will be unduplicated offerings,” in that no other institution at partnership centers could offer the identical degree programs. As UPC-2 stated:

Procedures will be followed to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, fairness and consistency in decisions related to new credit programs. SPJC will give the University of South Florida, the largest and closest University to the Pinellas County area, first right of refusal for complete degree offerings.

Therefore the UPC would be created to expand access for the residents of Pinellas County and the surrounding areas by offering them degrees from partner universities around the state and the nation.

In January 1998, an SPC internal white paper entitled “Better P.A.C.E., Pinellas Access to College Education” was created in order to share information with SPC leadership and initiate discussion. This presentation outlined who the affected parties would be, degree obtainment, strategic assessment, SPJC values, significant trends, and an option for a limited four-year degree authority. This was the first document to actually state SPC may use the option of offering limited four-year degree authority. The

presentation addressed the advantages and disadvantages to this option. “Pinellas Access to College Education was primarily used to make a case for the UPC concept, however you can begin to see the groundwork being laid for SPC to eventually offer four-year degrees,” stated UPC 4.

The UPC was officially created in 1998. According to UPC-5, the first six partner universities were chosen based on the degree needs in Pinellas County. Through a job summit and economic development survey, the highest demand degrees were selected. Once the degrees were established, universities were chosen based on their academic standing in that particular degree area. The original partner universities were Florida State University, the University of South Florida, the University of Central Florida, Florida Gulfcoast University and Eckerd College. These institutions brought immediate credibility to the UPC and allowed the concept of *partnerships* to proceed. However, anytime something new is introduced into an existing organization change becomes a major concern and leaders must respond.

Organizational Change

Integrating the complexities of existing leadership, management skills, collaborative effort, and individual identities into a cohesive whole to achieve this newly defined partnership strategy of creating a University Partnership Center proved to be less of a challenge than anticipated. All five participants reported that due to having patience with the employees, who had established patterns of activity, and clearly defining outcomes created the immediate success. “St. Petersburg College is nationally known as a leading community college, in part because of its willingness to change and grow” said

UPC-3. “The college consistently ranks among the top two-year institutions in the country in granting Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees,” said UPC-3. In order to maintain its national recognition, “the college is always changing and implementing new programs and initiatives,” says UPC-4. “When we started the partnership center and later the four-year programs, these two changes [developing the UPC and four-year degree granting status] were vastly different from the previous changes in that we were actually changing the college mission in what now can be seen as positive, and done in incremental steps,” says UPC-1.

These steps included: (1) obtaining the data to show need and access issues in Pinellas County; (2) having the right internal leadership and convincing the external leadership that this was the right issue at the right time; (3) finding partner universities who were willing to see the partnership center as an opportunity for offering their degrees at an off campus site; and, (4) obtaining faculty and staff buy-in at SPC. Obtaining the buy-in could have been one of the most difficult issues in this process; however, all the participants in this study emphasized how well this concept was accepted. For instance, UPC-1 stated:

Many institutions have found it difficult to have faculty buy-in when change occurs, and this wasn't just change, this was mission change. The idea that the faculty could teach for the partner institutions really got them excited about potentially teaching in SPC's four-year program when it started.

Another key to successful sweeping organizational change was that the president's leadership team went out and sold the concept to the 11 different SPC sites in

Pinellas County. “What seemed to make sense to the faculty and staff was the numbers on access and needs in Pinellas County, and that we were going to build the facility [the partnership center] on the Seminole campus,” noted UPC-5. The campus was a brand new site for the college and the concept of it being the technologically innovative campus was already in place. “The acceptance of the UPC was seen as another innovative addition to the Seminole campus and I believe downplayed the idea that it would be as large as it turned out to be and as mission changing as it was,” said UPC-3.

A key leader with both political contacts and college experience took charge of creating and building the UPC. “By putting the right person in charge it gave us immediate credibility both within the organization and outside the college,” said UPC-1. “That decision was one of the wisest decisions we made in the process of the whole experience,” said UPC-3. “It took us from infancy in the world of partnership centers to becoming a national model and that was due to the strong and effective leadership of the head of the UPC,” said UPC-1. UPC-1 continued by saying, “that leader not only helped to write the legislation, but also had the key contacts that helped SPC make the jump to the four-year level a great success.”

“While it was important to show the state legislature the success rate of the UPC, it was equally important to show the employees at SPC how successful SPC had been in past change efforts, such as partnership libraries, without interrupting the culture of the organization,” said UPC 3. “We started the center in 1998 and in 2000 we were advocating that we move toward becoming a four-year institution,” stated UPC-1.

As with any change, timing is of the essence, and with this endeavor it was no exception. “We hadn’t given the organization time to coalesce around the first major change to the organization [the UPC] and here we were embarking on a greater change [four-year degree status],” said UPC-4. UPC-4 continued by saying “I believe that in this case the quick turnaround was advantageous because we had just had people accept a major change that had been successful and now we were moving on another change that seemed as acceptable to the institution as the first.” UPC-5 stated that it was thought of as “success breeds success, so why not move forward now”. As UPC-1 stated:

Had we tried to move SPC immediately to the four-year status, there would have been much more resistance by the faculty and staff. It is kind of interesting that we thought demonstrating the need for baccalaureate education to political powers would help make our case to become a four-year college. It actually worked to help make the people in our organization believe that we could do it.

“This organizational change has probably been the greatest morale builder that the college has ever seen. I think people are just so pleased with it and the natural result is that there’s a whole different attitude towards the college. It started with the UPC and continued with the four-year status,” said UPC-1, “This has been exciting for everyone.”

The college was at a pivotal point in time when this transpired. “We could have sat back and followed the lead of others or we could take the initiative to be the change agent. We took the latter because that is who we are and fortunately it has worked out even better than we had planned,” said UPC 4. This was due to both potential and

organizational readiness. This readiness and the organizations willingness to embrace change laid the groundwork for success.

Success

Once the UPC was built and the first degree programs were offered, the success of this model was immediately recognized, and the possibilities for SPC to move to a four-year institution were on track. As UPC-1 stated, “the UPC was the precursor, the first step in changing the mold and merging community colleges with baccalaureate and graduate programs. It made it possible to move forward with the four-year degrees”. All the participants in this study were excited that the UPC was as successful as it was, because they recognized it helped to solidify their argument on the need for SPC to offer four-year degrees. According to UPC- 2:

The UPC was the largest cog in the process of making SPC a four-year institution. The UPC provided the argument that there was a need, and in addition to that, the community shortages in the areas of nursing, education, and technology management opened the door with virtually no argument that would withstand the statistical base that St. Petersburg College should have four-year degree authority. The UPC certainly greased the way for us to move at a faster pace because we had already experimented. We knew there were so many people here that needed higher educational opportunities. Had we not had the results of the UPC it would have been a guessing game.

“There is no doubt that the UPC set the foundation for SPC to move forward into the four-year degree business,” said UPC-5. As UPC-4 stated:

The UPC demonstrated undeniably by the students who came flooding through the door to take classes, that an unmet need was finally being met. The evidence of need was irrefutable and SPC was able to use that to convince the politicians and leaders to support the move from a two-year college to a four-year college.

UPC-2 emphasized that, “if the UPC had not occurred, the need would still be there, but it’s evident that without the UPC showing that need in black and white, this college may not have been able to achieve the four-year status.” The UPC was a convenient way to transition and was an appropriate way to say, “here we are on the SPC campuses, interlocked with universities, providing services,” said UPC-5. UPC-4 further emphasized:

We got to see how it worked, and I think it was pretty clear we could do it. Not only could we do it, but once we brought the UPC in and saw how the need was met, we saw that there was more to do. The UPC program provided us with a launch pad and a vision of where we might go and made it possible for us to pursue four-year status. It certainly made it easier for the four-year college to be accepted and become a reality.

Summary of Findings

The important themes that were reiterated throughout the interview process fell into the following five areas: access/need, partnership, leadership, organizational change, and success. The participants were forthcoming in their comments and embraced the idea that this story should be told.

Access and Need

In analyzing the findings, lack of access and the resulting need gave SPC the opportunity to move forward with their new found mission. That new mission was to go beyond that of a community college and offer baccalaureate and graduate degrees through its partnership center and later, offer four-year degrees of its own.

Originally, community colleges were established to offer access to higher education in communities that had an educational need. Florida embraced this idea and established 28 community colleges with missions to respond to community needs. In Pinellas County, St. Petersburg College was founded to help meet the needs of a growing population and to provide local access to higher education for students with limited resources. As the population grew to over one million residents, SPC sensed its role should change as well. The leadership at St. Petersburg College was well prepared for any opportunity that presented itself to make the case that greater access to higher educational opportunities needed in the Pinellas County area.

Each of the participants in this study stressed that having the needs assessment researched and prepared put them in position to act quickly once the PEPC report was released. There was even a sense that there was advance knowledge of the PEPC report and what it entailed which allowed SPC to move faster than other institutions towards some type of implementation. Thus, it was not surprising that SPC was ready to move forward with much of the preliminary research having taken place. Deciding which route the college should take [the UPC or the four-year degree granting status] that would allow for least resistance and greatest chance of success, initiated much debate.

Ultimately, all participants felt comfortable with the decision that allowed SPC to have it both ways. They felt that the UPC concept would confirm the needs assessment and, therefore, could be used as a basis to move to four-year degree status when the timing was right. In order to move forward, leadership would play a big role.

Leadership

There is no question that the five individuals who were interviewed and who comprised the leadership team had already experienced successes within the college organization and were convinced that the partnership center concept would work. All five participants had witnessed transformation at different levels of the organization, but also realized that this time they would all need to become transformational leaders. The sense was that this was the biggest undertaking the college had ever seen. In addition, SPC's long standing reputation was riding on the results.

As leaders themselves, the five individuals felt that the strength of the leadership of the college president would make this evolution of the college successful. Even though the five individuals who participated in this study were leaders in their own right, they called the SPC college president an "entrepreneurial President" and a transformational leader. The leadership that the college president had shown with his past successes, his long tenure at the college, and his political connections made him the perfect choice to be able to move the partnership and four-year status ideas forward to fruition.

It was evident that the participants believed that while the internal leadership was most important, they recognized the need for strong external leaders to be part of the larger team in order to make this transition a success. They emphasized that the

connections the college had with leaders at all levels of government including an elected official on staff was a real benefit. They acknowledged that for other institutions to be able to follow this roadmap to success they would need to have elected officials who were willing to take on their cause. After the leadership created the plan for moving forward with this initiative, it was important that they used their abilities to start to build partnerships.

Partnership

All of the participants commented on the irony that while they were exploring the idea of partnerships, which they interpreted as joining together, the overall outcome of SPC becoming a four-year institution may have occurred because of a broken partnership. The relationship between SPC and USF had been strong over the years, with SPC sending more transfer students per year to USF than any other community college. Yet when it came time to collaborate and partner on a big money grant, the two institutions could not get along.

A majority of the participants in this study did have a loyalty to USF, but they realized that once the personality clash occurred between the two college presidents, the partnership would never be the same. In turn, this broken partnership between SPC and USF was a motivation for SPC to create partnerships with other universities and work towards making them successful. Those partnerships occurred largely due to the credibility that SPC had along with the leadership and political connections that the partners were familiar with. The interviewees felt that if the partnership concept between colleges and universities could work then other partnerships would also have a chance of

succeeding. They realized, however, that any major change would mean a shift in the organization's mission and policy.

Organizational Change

From the outset, all of the participants agreed that this would be the greatest organizational change the college had ever undertaken. They felt confident that based on previous changes that had taken place at the college, further change could be successful. They did, however, recognize that this change had a much greater risk associated with it. They also recognized that changing the mission of the college, both when starting the partnership center and later when the college moved to four-year, would put the college under more scrutiny than it had ever been before. This was a factor in accepting the incremental step plan as opposed to immediately initiating the four-year concept. All participants agreed that even with the incremental plan, if the UPC had not been successful, future change such as moving to four-year degree granting status would have been next to impossible.

Success

Throughout the interview process, all the participants indicated satisfaction with the success of the UPC and the resulting four-year degree granting status. Their idea of success was based upon enrollment data, quality of programs, and overall growth of degree programs. All five participants stressed that the incremental process created the success. They believed that if the college had attempted to move directly to the four-year level, the external opposition would have been so fierce that it may never have occurred. Participants concluded that the success of the UPC was the impetus for SPC gaining its

four-year degree status. They believed that SPC has developed a model that other community colleges could easily follow if they would first demonstrate the need and have a strong transformational leadership team.

Chapter Summary

The five participants who were interviewed for this case study addressed the role of the UPC as the impetus to the creation of SPC's four-year programs. Though the specific recollection of events that took place in this transformation varied slightly, common themes emerged, shedding light on the phenomenon of UPC's as a vehicle to help community colleges gain four-year status. The results echoed the themes of available literature.

The UPC was established because Pinellas County had a need for increased access to upper division higher education. The participants indicated that this was a key to being able to move forward with the building of the UPC and later the four-year degree program. It also took strong internal and external leadership in the mode of transformational leadership. SPC had the stars aligned with a president that had longevity and connections to political leaders who were in roles of leadership who could move this concept forward. While SPC attempted to build a partnership with its regional university, USF, it was the broken partnership with USF that moved SPC to start a multi-university partnership center. It was this partnership center that lead to SPC moving forward in its quest to become a four-year degree granting institution. The participants all acknowledged that making two dramatic organizational changes within two years of one

another worked out in this situation. The quick change led to the success of both the partnership center and the four-year degree granting opportunities for SPC.

In summation, all five participants were pleased with how the process took place and the outcomes that occurred. UPC-1 summed things up when stating “we felt confident that we had all the pieces in place to be successful, but it was still satisfying for everyone involved to see how successful both the UPC and four-year initiatives have been. These were career achievements that were historical and it was a real honor to be part of it.”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This study focused on five internal leaders at St. Petersburg College (SPC) who were involved in both the creation of the University Partnership Center (UPC) and the initiatives for SPC to become a four-year institution. The purpose of this case study was to tell the story of how the University Partnership Center (UPC) at St. Petersburg College (SPC) served as the impetus for St. Petersburg College to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees. The researcher's goal was to provide information that could help legislatures decide if the approach of building a UPC first to show that a need exist is the correct step before granting a community college four-year degree status. Another goal was to help other community colleges that are contemplating creating their own baccalaureate degree programs decide on a useful approach.

Chapters One through Four presented the background of the problem, a review of the literature, the procedures used to conduct the study, and the findings of the study. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, a discussion section, conclusions, limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for further research in the area of creating four-year degree programs at community colleges.

Summary of the Study

Purpose of the Study

University Partnership Centers are a new concept that began in the early to mid 1990's. A review of the higher education literature revealed limited research on the

subject of UPC's and whether they could be the foundation for community colleges offering four-year degrees. The purpose of this study was to show how the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College served as the impetus for St. Petersburg College to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it developed a model for all community colleges that may want to use partnership centers as a basis for gaining four-year status. As the state legislature looks for fiscally conservative ways to deliver higher education throughout Florida, the UPC at SPC model and the SPC four-year model will be helpful in guiding legislators in this debate. This study will also allow legislators to determine if it is better to use partnership models to increase higher education opportunities in an area or whether UPCs should be used to demonstrate the need for baccalaureate degrees, allowing other community colleges to start four-year programs.

Methodology

The method used in this study was qualitative research in the case study tradition. The sample was comprised of five purposively selected leaders who were directly involved in the creation of the UPC at SPC. Data was collected through the use of structured interviews utilizing an open-ended questionnaire, as well as a review of other pertinent documentation. Data analysis procedures and methods verification in the case study tradition were followed. The data collected was analyzed through the use of coding, triangulation, and interpretation by the researcher. Findings were presented in response to

the research question through the use of the themes of access/need, leadership, partnership, organizational change and success.

Limitations

The sample was limited to five participants who were involved with the creation of the UPC and the four-year program at SPC. Since the process of starting the UPC began in 1998, nine years have past and recollections by the participants may not be as accurate as they would be had the study been completed immediately after the event occurred. Also, this study looked only at the perspective of the internal leadership team at SPC and not the perspective of other individuals and institutions that were directly involved with this process. These individuals include the local, state and federal government representatives and the institution included the University of South Florida. The possibility exists that other conclusions could be drawn from these other perspectives.

Another limitation is that the conclusions from this case study may be specific to St. Petersburg College. Other community colleges in other places with different circumstances and people involved may not experience the same kind of results. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable. However, the findings may be transferable to other settings. Through participant demographics and the texturally rich descriptions provided, readers may ascertain the level of transferability of this research. Finally, because the researcher is employed at St. Petersburg College and interacts on a daily basis with the key players who were involved in this process, possible researcher bias may be perceived as a limitation.

Discussion of the Findings

Discussion

The themes discussed by the participants in this study relate to the literature in Chapter II. The first theme was needs and access. The literature states that community colleges were established to accommodate the needs of students who desired to remain within the community and access a college education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2006). This was true for the 28 Florida Community Colleges, including St. Petersburg College. In Pinellas County, SPC was successful in helping the county meet its needs by offering access to a two-year degree in higher education. However, as the county grew to over one million people so did the need for upper division and graduate degree opportunities. SPC prepared itself to meet the challenges set forth in the 1997 PEPC report by first establishing the UPC and later establishing four-year degree programs at SPC. The five participants in this study agreed that the UPC and four-year initiatives were simply an extension of the original community college mission of expanding access to higher education in communities that had a need. The only difference was the new concepts would expand the mission to the baccalaureate and graduate degree levels rather than just the two-year level.

The type of leadership that moved the UPC and four-year model forward was transformational. As elaborated on in the literature review, transformational leadership is a style of leadership that has been shown to be effective in more innovative, non-routine change situations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eisenbach, Watson & Pillai, 1999). The participants interviewed for this study indicated that it took internal and external

transformational leadership to make this transformation for SPC a success. They emphasized the longevity of the SPC president as a major reason the transformation could occur smoothly. They also concurred that this transformational style is what allowed the organization (SPC) to make such a dramatic change.

In order to change an organization, Lewin (as cited in Schenin, 2004) identified three necessary steps in his Change Theory: “Unfreezing, changing, and refreezing” (p. 15). The participants in this study spoke about how SPC’s evolution of change followed these steps. The organization was *unfrozen*, change occurred, and the organization was *refrozen*. However they also indicated that while normally an organization would have to be opened up twice for two dramatic changes such as the UPC and four-year degree program initiatives, both of these transformations occurred while the organization was unfrozen the first time. According to the participants, since the UPC and four-year programs took place in a two-year period, there was not time to refreeze the organization, and therefore, it was not necessary to unfreeze the organization again.

Prather and Carlson (1994) were one of the first to point out that a community college could show access needs for higher educational opportunities by creating a partnership center. Lorenzo (2005) elaborated on partnership center models by listing six types that he deemed successful. While Lorenzo classified St. Petersburg College as part of what he calls the Hybrid model, and while that characterization fits SPC, it does not tell the whole story. As the participants in this study pointed out, there was more behind the SPC decision to build a UPC and, therefore, SPC could become its own model of how a partnership center could help establish a community college four-year program.

As the literature review explains, SPC successfully expanded its mission in 1987 to address the needs of flexibility and innovation in the way services were provided, the integration of educational goals into lifelong learning, and the encouragement of minority students to utilize the SPC's available resources and opportunities. Twenty-one years later the participants were cognizant of the success of those mission changes and knew they needed to be successful too. In fact, both the UPC and four-year degree programs have become major successes. Based on high enrollment numbers, the participants believe that these new changes will have an impact even greater than any of the previous changes implemented by the college.

Conclusions

The findings of this study support the following conclusions: First, the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College helped Pinellas County meet the goal of providing higher education opportunities for its residents by creating access to baccalaureate and graduate degrees. Second, internal transformational leadership was important in the development of the UPC model and later the four-year degree model. Also, it was important to have external leaders holding key leadership positions in government at all levels.

Third, an organization must embrace change and be ready and able to move at a quick pace. The individuals who make up the organization must be willing to accept a change of the organization's mission. All participants in this study believed that the dramatic change of first expanding the college's mission by building the UPC and then, within two years, creating the four-year programs made the changes easier and less

dramatic than if the college had jumped directly to four-year status. Fourth, St. Petersburg College used the UPC as an impetus to become a four-year college. The participants all agreed that showing the need for baccalaureate and graduate degrees through high enrollment at the UPC, made the case for SPC to be able to grant four-year degrees.

Therefore, other community colleges starting a four-year program should, first, demonstrate a need for access to baccalaureate and graduate degrees. This can be accomplished by creating a UPC. During this process the community college should have an experienced transformational leader who has strong ties to external leadership. The leadership of the college must be willing to change its mission by expanding its mission.

Recommendations

Implications

This study contributes to the literature on university partnership centers and describes how they can be used by community colleges to set the foundation for offering four-year degree programs. Most of the literature focuses on partnerships in general and neglects specifically university partnership centers and how, by addressing issues of need and access, University Partnership Centers can be used to advance a community college's mission toward offering four-year degrees. This study fills that gap by demonstrating that university partnership centers can be a predicate to community colleges offering four-year degrees. Insights from this study may prove beneficial to community colleges that want to achieve four-year status for their institution.

Recommendations for Further Research

There exists a gap in the literature concerning the development of university partnership centers. A review of the literature, as well as the findings of this study, illuminate the need for further research into university partnership centers and all their potential uses. A quantitative test of this researcher's findings would include creating a survey instrument and administering it to the internal and external leaders who were involved in this process. Other future studies might concentrate on how the partner universities felt about being used to show need so that SPC could gain the credibility necessary to ask the state legislature for four-year programs.

Because this study concentrated on just one university partnership center, future studies could be done at other community colleges that had a UPC before being granted four-year degree status. There is at least one other community college that fits that criterion in Florida and there may be others that fit that model elsewhere in the United States. Regardless of the type of study, it is clear that more research needs to be conducted on University Partnership Centers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the overall conclusions of the study. The summary outlined the purpose and significance of this research as well as the method and limitations. The discussion of the findings illuminated the process of how the University Partnership Center at St. Petersburg College was developed and used to help St. Petersburg College become a four-year degree granting institution. Additionally, the conclusions drawn from the interviewing and coding processes were outlined. Finally,

recommendations were addressed, including the implications of this study and ideas for further research in the area of University Partnership Centers.

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APPENDIX A

Demographics

1. What is your current title with St. Petersburg College?
2. What was your position when you first started to work for St. Petersburg College?
3. What were your other positions with St. Petersburg College and at what campus?
4. How long have you been with St. Petersburg College?
5. How many years have you been involved with higher education?
6. What degrees do you hold?

Questions for Interviewee

1. How did you first learn about the UPC?
2. Would you please describe the UPC and what it does?
3. Why was the UPC created?
4. What has been your connection with the UPC at SPC?
5. What need has the UPC filled for Pinellas County?
6. How successful do you believe the UPC is in filling that need?
7. What is the connection between the UPC and SPC?
8. Are the UPC and the SPC four-year program mutually exclusive?
9. Can you share your thoughts on how the UPC has affected SPC?
10. Could you please discuss whether or not you think SPC would have become a four-year institution if the UPC had not existed first? Why or why not?
11. What type of leadership occurred at SPC that helped create both the UPC and the four-year initiatives?

12. Has this type of leadership been applied to other SPC initiatives?
13. What kind of changes did the leadership have to consider in regard to the organization to help bring this change about?
14. What effects did this organizational change have on the employees of the institution?
15. Is there anything else about the UPC at SPC that you would like to add that I have not asked?

APPENDIX B

From: Carol Copenhaver
Sent: Thu 3/23/2006 10:59 AM
To: Lars Hafner
Cc:
Subject: RE: SPC/IRB Approval

Lars,

As chair of the St. Petersburg College IRB I give my approval for you to move forward with your exciting dissertation study. As a representative of SPC I am pleased that you are using our college as a case study that will codify two of the most innovative programs this college has instituted. Best of luck on your endeavor. We are proud of you.

Carol

APPENDIX C

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student in the Adrian Dominican School of Education at Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida through a 19-member cohort at the University Partnership Center located at St. Petersburg College in Seminole, Florida. I have recently received approval of my dissertation proposal along with Institutional Review Board affirmation to move forward with my dissertation. I am approaching you with the request to interview you for approximately 45 minutes using open ended question. Your overall time commitment in agreeing to be interviewed would be roughly 2 hours. This would include the interview as well as any time it would take you to review the transcript of your interview and answer any follow up questions or clarification I may need to ask you.

My dissertation topic is “The Role of the University Partnership Center in Transforming St. Petersburg College to a Four-Year College: A Case Study.” I recognize that you were one of the key individuals that helped create the University Partnership Center as well as a person who later played a role in St. Petersburg College becoming a four-year institution. Your knowledge of what occurred back in the late 1990s with regard to the development of the University Partnership Center will be invaluable to my research.

Below is a signature line that if signed will confirm your willingness to participate in my research.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this research by Lars Hafner and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this experiment.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Witness

Date

APPENDIX D
Barry University
Informed Consent Form

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is, The Role of the UPC in Transforming SPC to a Four Year College: A Case Study. The research is being conducted by Lars A. Hafner, a student in the Leadership and Education department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Higher Education. The aim of the research is to tell how the UPC at SPC served as the impetus for SPC to become the first community college in Florida to award baccalaureate degrees. In accordance with these aims, the following procedures will be used: interviews. I anticipate the number of participants to be 5.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: to participate in a 45 minute interview that will be audio taped and you will also be asked to take time to review the transcript and for any follow up or clarification questions that I may have of you. Your total time commitment is anticipated to be no more than two hours. Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntarily and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects. This includes that your participation or refusal will in no way impact upon the professional relationship you and I have outside of this research project.

The risks of involvement in this study are minimal and include none. The following procedures will be used to minimize these risks: There are no known risks to you. Although there are no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study may help our understanding of the phenomenon behind the UPC at SPC.

As a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will refer to group averages only and no names will be used in the study. Data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. The audiotape of the interview will be kept in storage under lock and key. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the data. All data will be destroyed after 5 years.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Lars A. Hafner, at (727) 394-6202, my supervisor Dr. Teri Melton, at (305) 899-3869, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Nildy Palanco, at (305) 899-3020. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to participate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this research by Lars Hafner and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this experiment.

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Witness

Date

Lars A. Hafner

Curriculum Vitae

7112 2nd Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33707

Office: (727) 394-6200
Residence: (727) 381-5277

PROFILE

Lifetime commitment to promoting quality higher education with emphasis on the comprehensive community college philosophy. Over 21 years of experience within the Community College system currently serving as Senior Management/Associate Vice President of Florida's oldest and fifth largest institution with 11 campuses and 10,000 FTE. Dynamic communicator, with consistent ability to motivate faculty, staff and students. Twelve years of legislative experience as an elected state representative, with thorough understanding of the legislative process and the need for strong legislative relationships to secure support for the college. Full responsibility for budget projection and administration, long term and short term development, and fund raising.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy	Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida Leadership and Education, Higher Ed Admin December, 2006 GPA 4.0
Post Masters Certificate	University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida Community College Executive Leadership May, 2005 GPA 4.0
Master of Arts	University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland Speech Communication, Political Com August, 1985 GPA 3.6
Bachelor of Arts	SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo, New York Communication, Political Science May, 1983 GPA 3.4
Associate of Arts	St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg, Florida Liberal Arts May, 1981 GPA 3.7

EXPERIENCE

Senior Administrative Manager/Associate Vice President in charge of the University Partnership Center, Government Relations, Athletics

St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg, Florida 1998-Present

- Conceived, designed and promoted the University Partnership Center (UPC) at St. Petersburg College. Provided a sound strategic plan, negotiated critical strategic alliances, obtained financing, and built an operating infrastructure to support accelerated expansion. The UPC currently has 15 universities offering 44 bachelor and 31 graduate/doctorate degree programs.
- Currently provide day-to-day executive leadership to faculty, finance, personnel, curriculum, facilities, and partner institutions.
- Serve as Government Relations Representative. Responsible for lobbying at the Federal, State and local governments for St. Petersburg College.
- Appointed member of Presidents Cabinet.
- Oversee the colleges intercollegiate athletic teams.

Political Analyst

Channel 10, CBS affiliate, Tampa Bay, Florida 2002-current

- On camera analysis of national, state and local political activities.
- Fourteenth largest media market nationally.

State Representative

District 53, State of Florida. 1988-2000

- Chaired health and human services appropriations subcommittee and Conference Committee leading the negotiation, debate and passage of the \$12 billion portion of the \$50 billion budget.
- Chaired and sub chaired several other committees, including Education and Higher Education.
- Authored and led to passage numerous, significant pieces of legislation in the areas of education, criminal justice, health care and environment.
- Represented constituents' opinions and values at the state capitol and solved constituent problems in a timely and efficient manner.

Associate Professor, Director of Community College Relations

St. Petersburg Junior College, St. Petersburg, Florida 1985-1998

- Wrote and taught the curriculum for Speech Communication, Honors Speech.
- Phi Theta Kappa (national honor society) Advisor.

- Served as Director of Community College Relations.
- Received perfect scores on faculty evaluations every year.

APPOINTMENTS & AFFILIATIONS

Board of Trustees, Bayfront Medical Center, St. Petersburg, Florida
 Board of Directors, Bayfront Medical Center Foundation, St. Petersburg, Florida
 Board of Directors, Community College All Florida Academic Team
 Board of Directors, University of Florida Pharmacy Advisory Board
 Board of Directors, Healthy Start Coalition of Pinellas County
 Board of Directors, University of South Florida Public Health Advisory Board
 Board of Directors, Suncoast Center Foundation
 Board of Directors, St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce
 Policy Advisory Board member Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
 Commissioner, Claude Pepper Commission on Aging
 Commissioner, Education Accountability Commission
 Member, Phi Delta Kappa International

RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- League of Innovation. Researched and presented a strategic plan on how to enhance partnerships with other institutions as well as preparing the appropriate technologies to make the partnerships succeed.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Researched and presented how community colleges may programmatically expand to meet the ever changing needs of their students.
- Oxford Round Table at St. Antony’s College in the University of Oxford. Researched and wrote on America’s Potpourri of Higher Education Issues and a Case Study of One of Education’s Most Creative Partnerships.
- International Communication Association (ICA). Conduct system research in Washington area government department in the form of extensive personal interviews, survey research, analysis and feedback session.
- Research Assistant for the book, “Packaging the Presidency”. Author Kathleen Hall Jameson.

Awards

- Florida Community College Legislative Lifetime Achievement Award
- Florida Board of Regents Outstanding Legislator Award
- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council’s Leadership Award
- University of South Florida Medical School Education Award
- Florida Chamber of Commerce Award
- Phi Theta Kappa Outstanding Advisor Award
- Others furnished upon request